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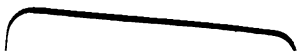
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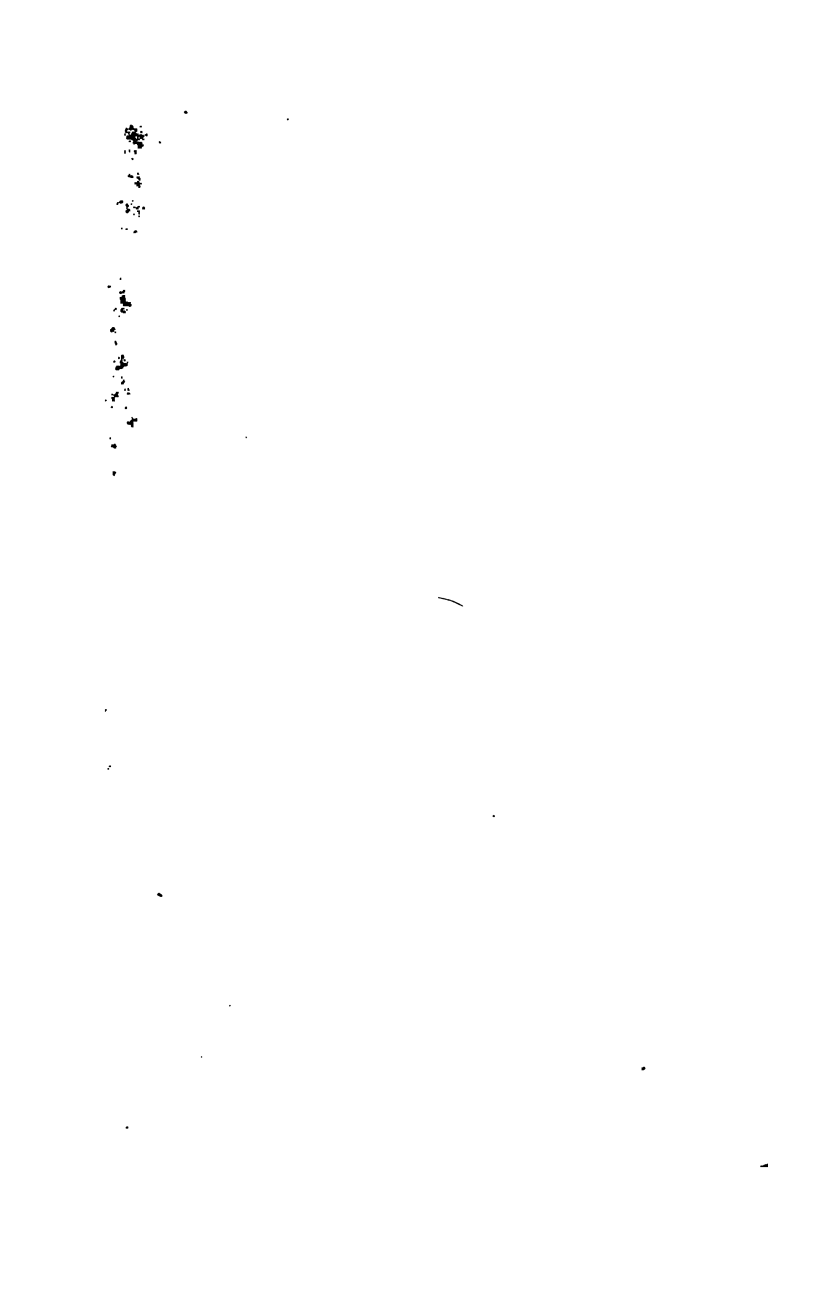
BY
FLORENCE

JEWISH HISTORY



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STORIES FROM JEWISH HISTORY.







• ESTHER BESEECHING KING AHASUERUS TO REVOKE HIS DECREE AGAINST THE JEWS.
Esther viii. 3.

2.

3.





STORIES
FROM
JEWISH
HISTORY

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STORIES
FROM
JEWISH HISTORY.

FROM THE BABYLONISH CAPTIVITY,
TO THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM BY TITUS.

BY

A. T. O. E.

AUTHOR OF "THE SILVER CASKET," "THE YOUNG PILGRIM,"
ETC. ETC.

Charlotte Tucker
— and —

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EDINBURGH; AND NEW YORK.

1871.



Preface.

THE works which I have chiefly consulted in compiling the following sketch, have been (in addition to the Holy Scriptures) the books of the Apocrypha, Josephus' Wars of the Jews, the elaborate writings of Prideaux, and a small volume on the history of the Hebrews, published some years ago in India.

There is no history more fraught with interest, or conveying more important lessons, than that of God's chosen nation. There are no annals which display instances of more heroic courage, faith, and self-devotion,—alas! of darker apostasy and crime,—than those of the descendants of Abraham.

May the reader rise from the perusal of this brief sketch with a deeper sense of the mercy and

justice of God, as revealed in His dealings towards His people ; and a fervent prayer for the hastening of that day when the Lord's gracious promise shall be fulfilled :—

“ I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications ; and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem : and Jerusalem shall be called, A city of truth ; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, The holy mountain.”

A. L. O. E.



Introduction.

FOR the sins of His people the Lord had stricken Jerusalem, and given up Judea into the hands of the heathen. The judgments of God had first fallen on the kingdom of the ten tribes; as they had been foremost in the sin of idolatry, so they had first met its awful punishment. Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, had attacked Samaria (724 B.C.), and after a siege of nearly three years had taken the city, and carried Israel into captivity, with Hoshea its king.

The punishment of the kingdom of Judah had been for some time deferred. While such monarchs as the pious Hezekiah and the faithful Josiah had sat on the throne of their ancestor David, God's mercy had guarded Jerusalem from her foes; but

since the time of these virtuous rulers, tyrants had arisen, who set not God before their eyes; princes and people had combined to break the laws of the Almighty, and despise the counsel of the Most High. The vine which the Lord had brought from Egypt, and had planted and watered with such tender care, had brought forth the *wild grapes* of rebellion and idolatry. The mandate had not gone forth, "*Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?*" but the Lord had said in His anger, "*I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste*" (Isa. v. 5, 6). In 606 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar carried captive to Babylon some of the most illustrious of the children of Judah, and subjected Jehoiakim their king to his power. In 599 B.C., the Assyrian monarch besieged and took Jerusalem, then under the sway of Jehoiachin, and led into bondage that prince and the chief of his people. In 588 B.C., the work of retribution was completed. Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, was taken, a miserable, blinded prisoner, to Assyria; the temple and palaces of Jerusalem were given to the flames, her walls were razed to the ground, and the mourning exiles from Judea,

by the waters of Babylon, hung their harps on the willows, and wept.

But though the Lord chastened his people, they were not given over to destruction. At the period at which the following sketch of Jewish history commences, that prophecy which had, seventy years before, been uttered by the inspired Jeremiah was on the point of fulfilment: "*Thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end*" (Jer. xxix. 10, 11). As a mighty despot had been the instrument, in God's hand, to chastise a rebellious race, so another powerful monarch was now appointed by Providence to raise the fallen, to restore the exiles; as a "shepherd," to gather together the dispersed flock of the Lord.





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STORIES FROM JEWISH HISTORY.

CHAPTER I.

THE RETURN FROM BABYLON.

The Decree of Cyrus—First Caravan Starts—Foundation of the Temple Laid—Samaritans Oppose—Esra Heads the Second Caravan—Esra Reforms Abuses.

IN the first year of the reign of Cyrus, the Lord stirred up the spirit of that king, probably through the influence of the aged Daniel, to issue throughout his vast dominions the following proclamation:—

“Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which

is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is the God), which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem."

Great was the joy of the faithful Jews, who throughout their long captivity had been waiting and watching for the fulfilment of the prophecies made to their fathers, when at length the prospect opened to them of return to their beloved country. Doubtless they recalled the prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah, and especially that one, uttered by the latter above one hundred and seventy years previously, in which the Lord called their deliverer by *his name*, saying of "Cyrus, he is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid."

The proclamation of the king sounded through the land like a trumpet-call, to gather together the exiles of Judea, and large numbers hastened to Babylon to make preparations for their journey. It was a second Exodus, a second release from

foreign bondage, to seek the land of promise. But it was not by the whole of the children of the captivity that the opportunity of returning to Judea was embraced with patriotic zeal. Ruined dwellings and wasted plains, a city without temple and without walls, offered few attractions to such as regarded the country of strangers as a home. Many shrank from the hardships of the journey, and the dangers which they must expect to encounter; many who had formed ties in Babylonia, felt bound by them to that land. The Jewish exiles were an emblem of those who, in all ages of the world, hear the call of conscience and religion. While some turn their faces towards a heavenly Zion, willing to leave all, and suffer all here, so that they may but find an inheritance above, the greatest number prefer present comforts to future blessings; their hearts cling to the pleasures of the world; they are too fearful, too busy, too rich, or too gay, to cast in their lot with the people of God.

The first return caravan was organized and directed by Zerubbabel, the grandson of King Jehoiachin, and by Jeshua, a grandson of the last high priest, Jozadak. The number of

those who joined them was about 50,000, including above 7000 servants of both sexes. Be-



LAVER.

fore they departed, Cyrus caused to be restored to them the most valuable of the sacred utensils which had been carried away from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar; thousands of vessels of silver and gold were now again to be devoted to the service of the sanctuary. Zerubbabel was also intrusted with large contributions towards the expense of rebuilding the temple, from the Jews who remained in Babylonia.



CANDLESTICK.

Many and sad must have been the partings when that vast caravan set out on its journey to the Holy Land! The voice of blessing and of prayer was heard, as those who stayed behind exchanged their last words of friendship with

those who were ready to depart. Anxious and loving eyes watched the long line of pilgrims, with their laden asses and camels, slowly disappearing in the distance; and the hopes and prayers of their brethren followed the brave band who first returned to the home of their fathers.

On reaching Palestine the caravan repaired at once to Jerusalem, which was found in a state of ruin and desolation. Before the travellers separated to seek habitations for themselves, they raised a large sum by voluntary contributions towards the rebuilding of the temple. They then employed themselves in securing dwellings for



ALTAR OF BURNT-OFFERING.

their families; and at the ensuing feast of tabernacles again repaired to Jerusalem, where sacrifices were offered on an altar erected on the ruins of the temple. After this the people applied

themselves zealously to the necessary preparations for the restoration of that edifice. In a year from the departure from Babylon these preparations were sufficiently advanced to allow of the great work being commenced, and the foundations of the second temple were laid amidst the noise of trumpets, cymbals, and shouting! But many



CYMBALS AND TRUMPETS.

of the priests and aged men, whose hair had grown white during the captivity—those who had seen the temple of Solomon when it stood in its glory and beauty—wept with a loud voice at the mournful recollection of the past, 535 B.C.

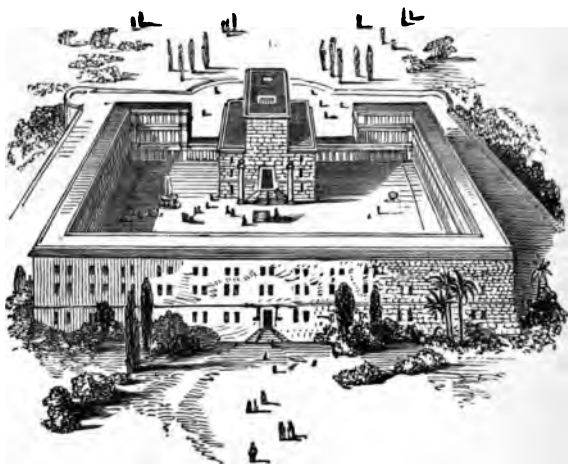
While the work proceeded, the Samaritans manifested a desire to aid in it, and to claim a community of worship in the new temple to be erected to the Lord. Their offers were declined by the Jews; and the people of the land, irritated by the refusal, did all in their power to weaken

their hands, and hinder them from proceeding with the building. An unscrupulous use of money and influence amongst the officers of government, enabled these adversaries of the Jews to raise such obstructions that the work was at length altogether suspended. For about fifteen long years the faith and the patience of the people of Judah were thus tried. They gradually lost heart for the work, and were disposed to believe that the set time for it had not yet arrived. The zeal of many waxed cold ; and, absorbed in the care of providing for their own security and comfort, the Jews were in danger of forgetting the sacred duty which they had at first so earnestly sought to perform.

From this apathy they were roused in the second year of the reign of Darius Hystaspes, by the stirring words of the prophet Haggai. "Is it time," he exclaimed to the people, "for you to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste ? Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house ; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord."

The call was not uttered in vain. Filled with fresh zeal, Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the people

hastened to resume the work of building, 520 B.C. Amidst the difficulties and discouragements which beset them, they were still cheered by animating messages delivered to them by Haggai. The temple gradually rose, far inferior, indeed, in splendour to that erected in the days of Israel's



THE SECOND TEMPLE.

great king, when gold was abundant, and silver so plentiful that it was counted as the stones of the earth ; but a gracious promise was given that the glory of the latter house should excel that of the first, for the DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS should

come to it, the presence of the Messiah should honour it, "*and in this place will I give peace,*" * said the Lord of hosts to his people.

The renewal of the work roused afresh the opposition of the adversaries of the Jews. Tatnai, the Syrian governor, sternly demanded of the builders by whose command they were re-erecting the ruined walls of their temple. The Jews pleaded the authority of the decree of Cyrus, and Tatnai referred the question to King Darius for decision. The result was happy, for after some search the decree in favour of the Jews was discovered. It not only authorized the erection of the temple, but directed the local government to afford assistance and supplies. These supplies the Jews had not hitherto ventured to claim, but Darius commanded that they should be given. Under the impulse thus imparted, the work proceeded with spirit, and four years afterwards it was completed, 516 B.C. The dedication was celebrated with great solemnity and joy; and the people flocked to the courts of the Lord, to perform again with thanksgiving and rejoicing the rites of their holy faith.

The Jews were now restored to their own land,

* Haggai ii. 9.

but they were under tribute to the Persians, and subject to the general control of the princes of that people. They were allowed the free exercise of their religion and laws, and were ruled by a governor of their own nation, or by the high priest when no such governor was appointed. With regard to religion, the fearful lesson taught by the desolation of the land, the destruction of the temple, and the captivity of the people, had greatly cured the Jews of that tendency to idolatry which had brought on them such misery and ruin. But the inherent corruption of the human heart, restrained in one point, broke out in others; there are few more humbling lessons of man's infirmity and the sinfulness of his nature, than may be gathered from the history of the Jews.

It does not appear that the people suffered further molestation during the long reign of Darius; and his son and successor, Xerxes, seems to have regarded them with favour. This monarch was succeeded, in 464 B.C., by Artaxerxes Longimanus, in whose reign the Jews proceeded to rebuild Jerusalem on a regular plan, and to surround it with a wall, as will appear in a following chapter.

Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the first leaders in the

restoration, had by this time been gathered to their fathers, and confusion and disorder were spreading widely amongst the Jews at Jerusalem. Light was the danger which they had encountered from the enmity of the people of the land, compared with that which they now experienced from too close alliances with them. Many broke the laws of their God by marrying heathen wives; some even of the princes and of the priests were guilty of this act of disobedience. A reformer was urgently needed, who should have wisdom to judge and firmness to act; and such a reformer was found in Ezra the priest, who headed the second large body of exiles, who returned from Babylonia to Judea, 457 B.C.

Armed with the authority of the Persian king, and intrusted with large offerings to the temple, including valuable contributions from the monarch himself, Ezra prepared for his journey. The bank of the river Ahava was the gathering-place for the people. There Ezra pitched his tent, and there he proclaimed a solemn fast, that the travellers might unite in supplication to the Almighty for protection on their dangerous way. As the band of pilgrims bound for Jerusalem included tender women and helpless children, and was ill provided

for defence against an enemy in the probable event of an attack, some thoughts were entertained of requesting a military escort from the king. But Ezra had declared before Artaxerxes his firm faith in the power and goodness of God, and the noble-minded Jew shrank from making a petition which might seem to imply distrust of the Almighty's providential care. Ezra would not lean on an arm of flesh, but with prayer and fasting he committed himself and his people to the protection of the Most High.

In safety the second body of exiles returned to the holy city. Having deposited in the temple the treasures with which he had been intrusted, Ezra applied himself with earnest zeal to the arduous work of reformation. The discoveries made by him of the guilt and corruption prevailing amongst God's chosen people, filled Ezra with grief and shame. He felt that the greatest of evils is sin ; the greatest of dangers, that of forfeiting the protection of the Almighty by trespassing against him. In deep sorrow of heart Ezra rent his garments, and, falling on his knees, with tears confessed before the Lord the sins of those whom divine mercy had restored to their land. "O my God, I am ashamed, I blush to lift up my eyes to

thee!" exclaimed the leader of the backsliding Jews; "for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our transgression is grown up unto the heavens!"

The blessing of the Lord whom he supplicated rested upon the efforts of Ezra to bring back the erring to the paths of righteousness. With repentance and weeping the Jews returned to their God; order was again restored; and the heathen wives were put away.

Let us now retrace a little the course of history, to consider some events of great interest and importance which occurred at the court of Persia, between the periods of the return of the first and second bands of exiles to the land of Judea.

PRINCIPAL CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.

	536—457 B.C.	B.C.
Hippias banished from Athens.....		510
Tarquins banished from Rome.....		509
Xerxes invaded Greece.....		481





CHAPTER II.

THE HISTORY OF ESTHER.

The Jewish Maiden—The Conspiracy Discovered—Haman's Plot—A Mourning Nation—The Golden Sceptre—The Queen's Banquet.

ARTAXERXES,* or, as he is termed in the Scriptures, Ahasuerus, sat on the throne of Persia. Lord of the widest kingdom which then existed upon earth—a kingdom which extended from India to Ethiopia, and comprised a hundred and twenty-seven provinces—the will of the monarch was the law to which many nations were constrained to bow. Ahasuerus possessed neither the wisdom nor the self-command requisite in one to whom power so vast is intrusted. He chose for his chief favourite and minister Haman,

* Archbishop Usher supposed Ahasuerus to be Darius; Scaliger contends that Xerxes is described under that name; but both Prideaux and Josephus regard Ahasuerus as identical with Artaxerxes, who began to reign 464 B. C.

an Amalekite, a man of unbounded cruelty and pride, and dismissed his own queen for venturing to disobey a capricious command given to her by her husband, when he was probably under the influence of wine.

In choosing another partner of his state to fill the place of the dethroned Queen Vashti, the despot sought for no higher qualification than that of personal attractions. But the Almighty Disposer of events guided the choice of the monarch.



SITE OF SHUSHAN OR SUSA.

In the palace of Shushan was a certain Jew, named Mordecai, of the tribe of Benjamin. With a father's care he had reared Esther, a young orphan maiden, a relative of his own. The Jewess was possessed of exquisite beauty; amongst

the fair she was the fairest ; Ahasuerus saw her, loved her, and raised the beauteous captive to the rank of the queen of Persia.

Her elevation appears to have had no effect in changing the character of this daughter of Abraham. In the palace of Ahasuerus, surrounded by luxury and pomp, Esther preserved her faith to the God of her fathers, though by the charge of Mordecai she kept her nation and kindred secret from the king. While placed in a position far above that of her early benefactor, the young queen still rendered to Mordecai the dutiful obedience of a daughter. Through her the Jew made known to Ahasuerus a secret plot to assassinate him, which had been made by two of his chamberlains. The conspirators suffered the punishment of death, but he to whose timely warning the king owed the preservation of his life, sat day after day in the gate of the royal palace, unrewarded and neglected.

Through this gate passed Haman, the proud favourite of the Persian monarch. As he moved on with a stately step amongst the courtiers and servants of the king, every head, save one, was bowed down before him—all did him obeisance save one ! That one was Mordecai, the bold, un-



QUEEN ESTHER.

compromising Jew, who scorned to pay any mark of respect to him who was the enemy of his faith

—to him who belonged to the guilty tribe doomed by a just God to destruction.

Haman was not a man to forgive that which he looked upon as an insult. Boiling with rage, he determined that not only should Mordecai expiate his offence with his life, but that the whole of his race should be swept away by one act of indiscriminate vengeance. The arbitrary temper of Ahasuerus, and his blind confidence in his wicked minister, too well seconded the bloody designs of Haman. This unprincipled favourite succeeded in obtaining from the despot a decree for the extermination of the Jewish people throughout all of his extensive dominions. Neither age nor sex were to be spared; the babe was to be slaughtered in the arms of its mother, and the spoil of the murdered victims was to be the prey of the merciless Haman! A time was actually fixed upon by lot for the perpetration of the horrible massacre, but, by the providence of God, the lot fell upon a distant day. Their consciences untroubled by a sense of their enormous guilt, Ahasuerus and Haman sat down to feast and to drink, while all Shushan was startled by the fearful decree that was to destroy a peaceful nation from the face of the earth!

When Mordecai heard of the king's commandment, he rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry. And in every province into which the king's decree came, there was great mourning amongst the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. Esther heard of the deep distress of Mordecai, though, secluded as she was in the royal apartments, she seems not to have been fully aware of its cause. She sent Hatach, the king's chamberlain, to Mordecai, and received through him a copy of the dreadful decree, and a charge to go herself to the despot, and make supplication for her persecuted people.

This message threw the young queen into great perplexity and distress. For thirty days the capricious monarch had expressed no wish to see her, and to enter unbidden into his presence exposed any intruder to the penalty of death, unless the monarch should extend his golden sceptre in token of pardon and grace. Through the medium of Hatach, Esther communicated her difficulties and fears to Mordecai. But to the resolute spirit of the Jew but one path appeared open to his adopted daughter, and that was the

path of duty. Whatever might be the difficulty, she must brave it ; whatever might be the danger, she must dare it ! He reminded Esther that it was probably for this very purpose that she had been raised to share the throne of Ahasuerus.

The reply of the queen showed her piety and her obedience, and her resolution at all hazards to intercede for her nation. She besought Mordecai to gather together all the Jews that were then in Shushan, that they might plead for her with that Almighty Ruler in whose hand are the hearts of kings. She promised that, at the end of three days, which she would herself devote to solemn prayer, she would appear before Ahasuerus, concluding her message with the touching words, " And if I perish, I perish ! "

The third day arrived, and the trembling Esther prepared to redeem her promise. She put on her royal apparel, the rich garments and glittering jewels whose splendour seemed a mockery of the fear and sorrow of her whom they adorned. And so Esther ventured into the presence of the despot, not armed with great natural courage, but leaning on that invisible Protector who can give strength to the weak and heroism to the fearful. Ahasuerus beheld his beauteous queen, and all his



ESTHER APPEARING BEFORE KING AHASUERUS.

affection towards her revived : he held out his golden sceptre, and perceiving that no light motive could have induced her to brave the peril

of death, "What wilt thou, Queen Esther?" he cried; "and what is thy request? It shall be given to thee to the half of the kingdom."

Notwithstanding the relief which the young Jewess experienced at the first peril being happily past, she was not yet prepared to disclose the secret of her race, hitherto carefully concealed. She confined herself to a request that the king and Haman should that day attend a banquet which she had prepared.

The request was instantly granted; the monarch and his favourite appeared at the feast; and again Ahasuerus gave a gracious promise to his queen—"What is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed." Again Esther sought a brief delay. She entreated her lord to come with Haman to another banquet on the morrow, and promised that she then would declare the subject of her anxious desires.

Haman left the presence of the queen glad, and with a joyful heart. Honoured as no other subject had been honoured, the spirit of the Amalekite was lifted up with pride. He approached the gate at which Mordecai still sat. Surely now the firmness of the Jew will give way; he will yield reverence at last to one who has so

fearfully shown his disposition to revenge, and his power to gratify it. No! Mordecai stoops not, and the tyrant passes on, full of rage against one whom he may kill, but whom he cannot conquer.

On what a slight thread hangs human happiness, when such a breath can destroy it! Haman had all that the world could give, but one evil passion, like a viper in the breast, poisoned in a moment every spring of enjoyment. He went to his home a miserable man—so miserable, that he was constrained to publish to others what was humiliating to himself. Haman called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife, and told them of the glory of his riches, the multitude of his children, the favour of his sovereign, and the repeated invitations with which Esther the queen had honoured him; closing all with this striking confession of the vanity of earthly greatness—"Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the gate of the king!"

Zeresh appeared a meet counsellor for so unprincipled a man as her husband. She and her friends assured Haman that the object of his hate could be easily destroyed, without waiting for the day appointed for the massacre. "Let a gallows be made fifty cubits high," said they, "and to

morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon; then go thou merrily unto the banquet."

The wicked counsel pleased Haman, and he caused the gallows at once to be made.





CHAPTER III.

CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORY OF ESTHER.

Persian Records—Malice Defeated—Pleading of Esther—Punishment of Haman—Triumph of the Jews.

THAT night King Ahasuerus could not sleep. Those peaceful slumbers which the meanest of his subjects could enjoy, fled from the eyelids of the monarch. It does not appear, however, that the rest of the despot was destroyed by any thought of the thousands of innocent families doomed by his caprice to destruction. Unable to obtain sleep, the king ordered that the book of records should be brought and read before him ; and as he listened to the account of the events of his reign, the conspiracy of his servants, and the means by which the dangerous plot had been discovered, were brought to the remembrance of the monarch.

"What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai?" said the king.

"There is nothing done for him," was the reply.

"Who is in the court?" asked Ahasuerus.

"Behold, Haman standeth in the court," answered his servants.

"Let him come in," said the king.

Now Haman had come into the outer court to procure from his master an order to hang Mordecai on the lofty gallows which had been erected. Full of his evil design, he presented himself before the king.

"What shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" said Ahasuerus, addressing his favourite.

Now Haman thought in his heart, "To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?" and eager to obtain the most distinguished mark of royal favour, to which his ambitious, presumptuous heart could aspire, Haman replied to his lord, "Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: and let this apparel and horse be delivered to one of the king's



THE BOOK OF RECORDS.

most noble princes, that they may array the man withal that the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.'"

Then Ahasuerus said to Haman, "Make haste, take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew. Let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken."

What must have been the feelings of Haman on receiving this most unexpected command, which he dared not for an instant dispute! What must have been the torment of his soul when he led through the city his intended victim, crowned and royally apparelled, and proclaimed aloud to wondering crowds, that the despised and persecuted Jew was one whom the king delighted to honour! Doubtless Mordecai received this singular reward as a token of good from the King of kings, as a sign that his prayers had been heard by Him who can give *beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*

His hateful commission executed, Haman hurried back to his home, mourning and with his face

covered. He found little consolation there from those who on the preceding day had encouraged him in the path of crime. "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall," said Zeresh and her friends unto Haman, "thou shalt not prevail against him, but shall surely fall before him."

And while they were yet talking to Haman, the king's chamberlains arrived, and hastened to bring him to the banquet, to which he had been invited by the queen.

Then at the feast Esther at length made known to Ahasuerus the grief that weighed upon her heart, and pleaded with earnest eloquence for her own life and the lives of her nation; "For we are sold," she exclaimed, "I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, to perish!"

"Who is he," cried the astonished king, "that durst presume in his heart to do so?"

Then Esther replied, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman."

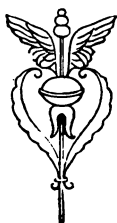
The king's indignation knew no bounds. Thoughtlessly he had signed the decree, little dreaming that it could possibly compromise the safety even of his beloved Esther! Haman saw the rising anger of his master, and, in an agony of

terror, made supplication for his life to the queen. But he who had shown no mercy found none in his hour of need. Those who had not dared to oppose him in his power, were now eager to hasten his downfall. One of the chamberlains who was present told the incensed monarch of the gallows fifty cubits high, erected by Haman for Mordecai.

“Hang him thereon !” cried the king. The just command was instantly obeyed, and the wretched Haman was cut off in his wicked career by the very death which he had designed for another !

It was less easy to revoke the murderous order which had already been proclaimed, by reason of that law of the Medes and Persians, which made royal decrees irrevocable. But Ahasuerus did all that he could do to counteract the evil effects of his own sinful compliance. A decree was published throughout the land, permitting the Jews to defend themselves against any enemy that might dare to attack them. The result was the complete triumph of the persecuted race over all whom hatred induced to attempt to execute the king's first decree. Mordecai was raised to high power, and his fame spread throughout all the

provinces ; the Jews had rest, and peace, and favour ; and an annual feast was appointed in commemoration of the great deliverance which the Lord had wrought for his people, through the instrumentality of a feeble woman !





CHAPTER IV.

THE JEWS UNDER NEHEMIAH.

Nehemiah's Petition—Building the Wall—Reading of the Scriptures—
Nehemiah Reforms Abuses.

MANY years had passed since the events recorded in the last chapter had taken place. Ahasuerus was dead, and Artaxerxes his son reigned on the throne of Persia. Ezra had for about ten years been pursuing his labours at Jerusalem, when the Lord raised up another leader for his people in the court of Shushan.

Nehemiah, one of the Jewish exiles, held the responsible office of cup-bearer to King Artaxerxes. He was a devout servant of God, and an earnest and devoted patriot. Amidst the splendours of a royal palace, his thoughts recurred often to his suffering brethren at Jerusalem, and



PERSIAN CUP-BEARER.

ardently did he desire the prosperity of the city of David.

These feelings were kindled into a warmer glow by the report which Nehemiah received from some of his countrymen who had returned from Judea. From them he heard that the remnant of the people that were left in Zion were in great affliction and reproach; that the wall of Jerusalem lay in ruins; that its gates had been burned with fire; and that aid from their breth-

ren beyond the Euphrates was urgently needed by the Jews in the city.

This aid Nehemiah was anxious to give, but felt apprehensive of difficulties in the way ; not the difficulty of quitting the pleasures and luxuries of the magnificent palace in which he held so honourable a place, but that of obtaining the consent of his royal master to his departure for the land of Judea. It is said that the nearest way to reach any heart is through Heaven ; such had been the experience of Esther, such now was the experience of Nehemiah. Fervently and humbly he entreated the Lord to give him favour in the sight of the king.

The anxiety which oppressed the noble Jew, expressed itself in his countenance, when, in accordance with his office, he placed the wine-cup in the hand of Artaxerxes. The king noticed his servant's look of depression, and inquired its cause.

"Let the king live for ever," replied Nehemiah ; "why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my father's sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire ?"

Then said the king to him, "For what dost thou make request ?"

Nehemiah silently lifted up his heart in prayer ere he made his reply to the monarch :—" If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my father's sepulchres, that I may build it."

Artaxerxes received the petition with favour. He not only permitted the departure of Nehemiah, but provided for him an escort, and gave him letters to the officers of government on the other side of the Euphrates, 457 B.C. It is from the year in which the Persian monarch issued his decree, permitting the rebuilding of Jerusalem, that is dated the commencement of the weeks of prophetic years, at the close of which the Lord Jesus was crucified (Dan. ix. 25).

Nehemiah soon found, on his arrival at Jerusalem, that his position there would be one of great difficulty, requiring both judgment and courage. The enemies of the Jews, especially Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the Ammonite, were possessed of power, cunning, and the most determined resolution to prevent the rebuilding of the ruined wall.

It was in the stillness of night that a single horseman, accompanied by a few attendants on

and build the house of the Lord God of Israel. He is the God, which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he separateth, let the men of his place help him with silver and with gold and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem."

Great was the joy of the faithful Jews, who throughout their long captivity had been waiting and watching for the fulfilment of the prophecies made to their fathers, when at length the prospect opened to them of return to their beloved country. Doubtless they recalled the prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah, and especially that one, uttered by the latter above one hundred and seventy years previously, in which the Lord called their deliverer by *his name*, saying of "Cyrus, he is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid."


The proclamation of the king sounded through the land like a trumpet-call, to gather together the exiles of Judea, and large numbers hastened to Babylon to make preparations for their journey. It was a second Exodus, a second release from

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foot, passed out through the gate of the valley. Thoughtfully he rode on where in ancient and happier times the bulwarks of Jerusalem had stood. He gazed sorrowfully on the blackened ruins over which the Assyrian conquerors had passed. But it was not to mourn in unavailing woe over the desolation of his country that Nehemiah made that midnight survey. That which was ruined he resolved to repair, and, with the blessing of God, to encircle the city once more with a protecting wall.

By his words, and yet more by his example, Nehemiah animated his countrymen to exertion. The circuit of Jerusalem was portioned out to the most zealous of the people, and each in his own division set heartily to work. In vain Sanballat and Tobiah tried to discourage the builders by representing their patriotic efforts as rebellion against Persia. In vain, time after time, they endeavoured to entice Nehemiah into a village, that they might deprive the Jews of him who was the life and soul of their undertaking. "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down," was Nehemiah's answer to their insidious proposals. A yet deeper snare was laid. Nehemiah was warned of a plot to assassinate him, and was



urged to fly to the temple. But again the brave leader's self-devotion defeated the schemes of his enemies. "Should such a man as I flee?" he exclaimed; "and who is he that being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life?"

The adversaries tried the effect of mockery and scorn. As they viewed the unceasing labours of the builders, "Will they," cried Sanballat, "revive the stones out of the rubbish that is burned?" "If a fox come up," rejoined the insolent Tobiah, "he shall even break down their stone wall." But notwithstanding this hatred and scorn, the wall rose higher and higher. Then the bitter adversaries of the Jews resolved to use weapons more formidable than words, and conspired to attack the builders. The peril was great, but Nehemiah and his followers were equal to the occasion. A watch was kept both by night and by day; they that builded the wall, and they that bare burdens, each with one hand wrought in the work, and with the other grasped a weapon for defence. Nehemiah, ever on the watch against the foe, changed not his garments, but lay down night after night in his daily attire, prepared to start up at the first sound of danger. He kept a trumpeter at his side, and said to the



ANCIENT BUILDING TOOLS.

nobles and the people, "The work is great and large, and we are separated one far from another; in what place therefore that ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us!"

By the indefatigable exertions of these devoted men, in the short space of fifty-two days the wall was completed. The enemies were cast down and discouraged, for they perceived that this work was of God.

And so, in the midst of a world that despises and hates them, God's people, through all generations, pursue the work that is given them to do ;

with one hand, as it were, armed to fight against besetting sins and inward corruptions, the other busily engaged in works of piety and love. He that will not fight, is unworthy to labour ; he that will not labour is unprepared to fight. It is they who, through faith, conquer sin and self, that are found most zealous in every good work.

The liberality of Nehemiah was equal to his activity and courage. With free hospitality he daily entertained at his own table a hundred and fifty of the Jews. This, and other expenses, Nehemiah defrayed from his own purse, refusing to draw from the people even the allowances due to his office. This generous conduct strengthened his influence, and enabled him with more boldness to denounce and crush a hateful system of usury which prevailed at this time amongst the richer Jews, who took advantage of the wants of their brethren, to take from them their lands, and even their freedom. Nehemiah induced his countrymen to enter into a solemn covenant with the Lord—a covenant to obey all the law, to refrain from marriages with the heathen, to bring due offerings to the temple, and to keep the Sabbath holy.

A reverence was shown for the Scriptures, which was one of the most encouraging signs of reviv-

ing religion. A pulpit of wood was erected in one of the streets of Jerusalem, and from this, from morning till noonday, Ezra the priest read aloud from the book of the law of Moses. The multitude of listeners was immense; all the people gathered themselves together as one man to hearken to the word of the Lord. When Ezra opened the book in the sight of this vast crowd, all reverently stood up to listen. When he blessed the Lord the great God, a loud, fervent Amen burst from the dense mass of the people, thousands of hands were lifted up towards heaven, and then the multitudes of Judah bowed their heads and worshipped with their faces to the ground.

After some time spent in labours for his country, Nehemiah returned to the court of Persia, having received only leave of temporary absence. But the disorders which again crept in amongst the backsliding Jews necessitated a second journey to Jerusalem, 434 B.C. Notwithstanding the strict law which forbade the entrance of Ammonites and other heathens into the temple, the high priest Eliashib, being allied to Tobiah, had actually prepared for him a chamber in the courts of the house of the Lord! The Sabbath was by many disregarded; the wine-press was trodden, burdens

carried, and merchandise sold on the day that was holy to God. The Levites were neglected, their dues were unpaid, and again some of the Jews had fallen into the grievous sin of intermarrying with idolaters.

Nehemiah suppressed these disorders with a firm and judicious hand, strengthening himself by prayer, and supported in all his difficulties and labours by the consciousness of the presence of that Almighty Being whom he was humbly endeavouring to serve.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.

	B. C.
Decemvirs banished from Rome	449
Battering-ram invented.....	441





CHAPTER V.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

Murder of Joshua—A Temple raised on Mount Gerizim—Battle of Issus—
Siege of Tyre—The White Robe Procession—Murder of Darius.

E now lose the sure guidance of the sacred writings, and must pursue our way by the dimmer light of uninspired history. "The two books of the Maccabees," writes Dr. Gray, "were certainly composed after the succession of prophets had ceased among the Jews." Of the first book he observes, "It was probably written by a contemporary author, who had witnessed in part the scenes which he so minutely and graphically describes;" and of the second book, which contains the account of Heliodoros and the martyrdom of the seven brethren, this writer remarks, "The fathers in general cite the book as a useful history, but not as of authority in points of doctrine."

After the time of Nehemiah, Judea ceased to form a distinct government, and was joined to the satrapy of Syria. Its internal government was, however, in the hands of its own high priests, and the civil power thus annexed to this office made it an object of great ambition, and unhappily gave rise to disgraceful contests.

On the death of Eliashib, 413 B.C., his son Joiada or Judas succeeded to the dignity of high priest. After he also had been removed by death, a wicked dispute arose between two of his sons, Johanan and Joshua, as to which should fill the sacred office. Johanan, like another Cain, slew Joshua in the inner court of the temple, and the holy place was polluted with blood shed by a brother's hand.

Bagoses, the satrap of Syria, hearing of this horrible crime, came to Jerusalem to take account of it. On his going into the temple to examine the spot where Joshua had been killed, the priests would have hindered his entrance, as no Gentile was permitted to cross the sacred threshold.

"What! am I not more pure than the dead carcass of him whom ye have slain in the temple?" exclaimed the indignant satrap; and after rebuking the Jews for suffering the house of their God

to be thus defiled, he imposed upon them, as a punishment, a heavy tax upon the lambs that were offered in sacrifice.

The nation at this time had fallen into a grievous state of coldness and formality in religion. The priesthood were worldly and corrupted, and looked upon the services of the temple as a weariness, unwilling to perform even the smallest without some earthly reward. But there were yet faithful ones left in the land—those who feared the Lord, and spake often to each other, and feared the name of the Holy One of Israel. “They shall be Mine,” said the Lord by the prophet Micah, “in that day when I make up My jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”

Of such appears to have been the next high priest, Jaddua, who succeeded his father, Johanan, 341 B.C. This faithful servant of God endeavoured to follow in the steps of Nehemiah, expelling his own brother Manasses for marrying the daughter of Sanballat, the Cuthite governor of Samaria. Manasses then repaired to his wife’s father, and the Samaritans availed themselves of the presence of a member of the pontifical family to erect a temple of their own upon the Mount Gerizim, of

which Manasses was made high priest. This measure greatly widened the breach between the Jews and the Samaritans; the rivalry of the two nations increased the bitter antipathy which had long existed between them.

The period at length arrived when the Jews were to exchange the yoke of Persia for that of another foreign nation. The winged leopard of Grecia, beheld in vision by Daniel, was now to follow the Assyrian lion and the bear of Persia; the kingdom of brass, as the prophet had foretold to Nebuchadnezzar, was to succeed to the kingdom of silver. Alexander the Great, king of Macedon, at the head of his Greeks, in a great victory at Issus crushed the power of the Persian Darius, which he afterwards completely destroyed.

The conqueror marched into Syria after his victory, summoned its various nations to yield submission, and laid siege to the city of Tyre, a place of great strength and importance, 332 B.C.

Tyre was a stronghold of superstition and idolatry. Celebrated for her commerce, her merchants were princes, her traffickers the honourable of the earth. But the destruction of this idolatrous city had been foretold centuries previously, both by the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel. "I will cast

thee to the ground, I will bring thee to ashes



TYRE.

consciously fulfilled by Alexander. With ex-



ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

upon the earth, in the sight of all them that behold thee," had been the message of the Lord while yet Tyre stood in her strength and beauty, with no one to make her afraid.

And now the prophecy was literally though un-

consciously fulfilled by Alexander. With extreme difficulty, but with a perseverance which overcame every obstacle, the great Macedonian seized upon the mighty city. He mercilessly

burned it to the ground, and destroyed or enslaved its people. In vain

had the Tyrians called

upon their idols, prayed to the deaf ears that could not hear, sought help of the hands that could not save! Eight thousand of the unfortunate citizens fell in the sack of the town, and were buried beneath its ashes; and two




BATTLE OF ISSUS.

thousand were barbarously crucified by order of the stern Alexander.

And now the conqueror, flushed with success, turned his march towards Jerusalem. Terror and alarm spread through that city. The Jews, faithful in their allegiance to Persia, had refused to supply the enemy of King Darius with the provisions which he had demanded for the sustenance of his army. This had greatly irritated Alexander, whose spirit was little able to brook such opposition to his despotic will. As soon as the ruin of Tyre was complete, the fierce conqueror therefore advanced upon Jerusalem, with intention to punish its people for daring to disobey his commands.

In the extremity of their danger, Jaddua and his countrymen threw themselves on the protection of their God. They implored his succour in their distress, and their prayers were heard and answered.

In a vision of the night Jaddua was directed to go out and meet Alexander dressed in the gorgeous robes of his office, and attended by a company of the priests, and all the people in white garments. They were not to draw the sword or lift the spear, but go forth to the destroyer of Tyre with no protection but that of the invisible



arm of Jehovah stretched out to defend them. Jaddua obeyed the command, and on the next day left Jerusalem in the manner directed.

The white-robed procession slowly mounted a hill which commanded a prospect of the country around them. Doubtless many a heart trembled, and many a cheek grew pale with fear, when a cloud of dust in the distance showed the approach of the terrible foe! Alexander's army drew nearer and nearer, the sunlight flashing from their weapons. Would not these weapons soon be dimmed in the blood of their unarmed, unresisting victims?

Once more the Lord showed his irresistible power over the hearts of men. No sooner did Alexander see the high priest, followed by the people, advancing towards him, than, as if struck by sudden awe, he hastened forward to meet the procession, and, to the astonishment of his own troops, did obeisance to the venerable Jaddua. While all stood amazed at this most unexpected conduct on the part of the offended conqueror, Parmenio, who was one of his friends, ventured to ask him the reason of it, and to inquire why he, whom every one adored, should pay such adoration to a Jew.

Alexander answered that it was not to him, but to the God whom Jaddua served, that he paid adoration; for that when he had been in Macedonia, meditating the war against Persia, which had been since so successfully begun, he had beheld in a dream this very high priest arrayed in such a dress as that which he now wore, who bade him pass boldly into Persia, promising that God should be his guide, and bestow upon him victory and success. Then turning to the high priest Jaddua, Alexander cordially embraced him, and entered Jerusalem in his company, where the proud conqueror of Persia offered sacrifices to the God of Jacob.

Jaddua having shown to Alexander the prophecies in which his triumphs were predicted, the king of Macedon left Jerusalem assured of that success which followed his arms. He called the Jews together before his departure, and graciously bade them ask of him whatever they might desire. They petitioned that they might be permitted the free exercise of their religion and laws, and be exempted from taxes every seventh year, during which they neither sowed nor reaped, but left the land to enjoy her Sabbaths, according to the commandment of God.

To all this Alexander graciously acceded ; but when similar petitions were offered by the Samaritans, who had merited well of the Macedonian monarch, by sending the supplies which the Jews had refused, Alexander returned a courteous but evasive reply, deferring compliance till, at some future period, he should have leisure fully to inform himself on the subject of their demands.

Alexander then pursued his victorious career. Darius, after a defeat at Arbela, fled towards Bactria, but was traitorously murdered by Bessus, one of his own nobles. Alexander reached the summit of power and pride. But he who was the lord of many nations was the slave of his own sinful passions : Alexander conquered his outward foes, but not the more dangerous ones within. Intoxicated with vainglory, he fancied himself to be more than man. Addicted to intemperance, in a drunken revel he killed his own friend Clitus, and by his wild excesses shortened his own existence. This extraordinary man died in the prime of his days and the zenith of his power, 323 B.C., leaving the vast empire which his prowess had subdued to be split into various kingdoms, and to be made the object of fearful

wars and bloodshed amongst his contending generals.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.

441—323 B.C.

	B. C.
Peloponnesian War began	431
Retreat of the 10,000 Greeks.....	401
Death of Socrates.....	400
Battle of Leuctra	371





CHAPTER VI.

JUDEA UNDER THE YOKE OF EGYPT.

Jerusalem Taken—The Soothsayer and the Archer—Profanity of Ptolemy Philopater—Persecution of the Jews—Judea Wrested from Egypt.

IN the first division of Alexander's empire, Syria devolved to Laomedon, and Egypt to Ptolemy Soter. Between them a

war arose, and its result was that all the provinces of Laomedon submitted to Ptolemy. The Jews alone, faithful to the oath which they had taken to the defeated ruler, refused to bend to the conqueror. Ptolemy marched against Jerusalem, which, being now strongly fortified,



PTOLEMY SOTER.

might have held out against him, but that the Jews, from a scrupulous regard to the sanctity of the Sabbath, would not at this period defend themselves on that holy day, 320 B.C. Ptolemy did not treat the Jews with great severity; for, though he sent a large number of them into Egypt, it was rather as colonists than bondsmen.

The son and successor of this king was a great patron of learning, and spared no expense in procuring curious books for his famous library in Alexandria. He caused the Hebrew Scriptures to be rendered into Greek; and this important translation still exists under the name of the Septuagint, from the tradition that seventy persons were employed in completing it.

Not only did Ptolemy avail himself of the services of the Jews as regarded literature—some of them were also enlisted in the army of the Egyptian ruler. An anecdote is related of one who had the courage openly to reprove the superstition of the idolatrous soldiery amongst whom he was serving.

This man, whose name was Mosullum, was noted for his valour, and famous for his singular skill in archery. As, on one occasion, he was travelling towards the Red Sea with his companions,

a certain soothsayer, who accompanied the band, commanded an instant halt. Mosullum demanded his reason for the delay.

"Look ye," answered the foreteller of events ; "behold that bird before us. If that bird stands, ye are to stand ; if he rises and flies on, go forward ; if the bird takes his flight the contrary way, you must all return back again."

The Jew, without speaking another word, fitted an arrow to the string, and let fly at the bird, which, the next moment, fell fluttering in death to the ground. Furious indignation was instantly excited amongst the superstitious beholders against the author of so daring an act. But Mosullum opposed calm reason to the folly of those who put faith in omens. "How could that poor creature," said he, "pretend to foreshow us our fortune, that knew nothing of its own? If this bird could have foretold good or evil to come, it would have kept out of this place for fear of being slain by the arrow of Mosullum the Jew."

Onias, the first high priest at Jerusalem, having died, 300 B.C., was succeeded by Simon his son, who, from the holiness of his life and the righteousness of his actions, was surnamed Simon the Just. This good man completed the canon of

the Scriptures ; and the Old Testament, as it has been handed down to us, was in its perfect form received by the Jews. Simon died 291 B.C., and Onias succeeded to the high priesthood.

Egypt, to which, as has been seen, Judea was at this period subject, was ruled by a succession of sovereigns, who all bore the title of Ptolemy.

A remarkable instance of the reverence with which the monarchs to whom the Jews were tributary often regarded the religion which those



PTOLEMY EUERGETES.

Jews professed, was shown by Ptolemy Euergetes, in the year 245 B.C. On returning from a successful expedition, this king of a most idolatrous nation chose to take his way through Jerusalem, and there render thanks to the God of Israel for the victories he had obtained over Syria. We thus see that the light of truth, confided to the Jews, shed a partial radiance over the nations by which they were surrounded.

A young Jew, named Joseph, nephew of the high priest Onias, rose high in the favour of Ptolemy Euergetes. He was admitted to the

office of receiver-general in the provinces of Coele-Syria, Phœnicia, Judea, and Samaria ; and, like his great countryman of the same name, acquitted himself with such wisdom and prudence, that he won and kept for many years the confidence of the king of Egypt.

In 216 B.C., Simon, second high priest of that name, succeeded his father Onias, who had been a weak and covetous old man, intent upon nothing so much as amassing treasure for himself. It was well that one of a nobler character had now entered upon so important an office, for a time of great difficulty was near, when the Jews would especially require courage and strong faith in their leader.


Ptolemy Philopater mounted the throne of his father. This young man was stained with the darkest crimes : he was the murderer of his mother and his brother, and subsequently proved himself a barbarous persecutor. He, however, appeared disposed, in the



PTOLEMY PHILOPATER.

earlier part of his reign, to render, as his father had done, honour to the great God of Israel. He visited Jerusalem, offered sacrifices to the Lord, and presented valuable gifts to the temple. Perhaps the conscience of this wicked prince was not altogether silent, and he thought by his oblations to appease that great Being who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

But Ptolemy was not contented with viewing the outside of the beautiful temple raised to Jehovah ; he was resolved to visit the sanctuary, to tread that Holy of holies into which none but the high priest was permitted to enter, and that only on the day of atonement. This raised an outcry all through the city. Simon opposed the entrance of the profane king into the holy temple ; he declared to him the law which forbade it ; but Ptolemy was disposed to regard no law but that of his own capricious will. Disregarding the expostulations of the high priest, and the distress and horror expressed in the countenances of the Levites, he pressed into the inner court, and was about to enter the sanctuary, when the wicked king was suddenly struck with such a terror and confusion of mind, that he was utterly unable to proceed, and he was carried half dead



out of the place which an invisible Power protected.

Rage and hatred swelled in the heart of the disappointed monarch. He had been conquered by fear, and he now sought to cover his mortification by revenge upon the worshippers of the omnipotent Jehovah. On his return to his capital—Alexandria—Ptolemy at once degraded all the Jews, who were living there in great numbers, and commanded that each should be branded with the mark of an ivy-leaf—the badge of Bacchus, the god of wine, whom this miserable idolater worshipped. All who refused to receive this disgraceful mark were ordered to be put to death; but such as sacrificed to the false gods were to enjoy equal privileges with the Macedonians, the original founders of the city. Of the many thousands of Jews who were in Alexandria, only three hundred persons were found base enough to forsake their God to win the favour of the king.

Enraged at the firmness of the majority, Ptolemy resolved to punish not only the Jews in Alexandria, but those who dwelt in any part of his dominions. He sent orders that all who were in Egypt should be sent to the capital in chains. There, it is said, that a great multitude of victims

being thus gathered together, the tyrant shut them up in the hippodrome, a large place without the city used for horse-races and games, and appointed a certain day in which they were all to be destroyed by elephants.

Crowds assembled on this day to witness the horrible spectacle ; but the king had sat up so late on the previous night at a drunken revel, that he slept on that morning beyond the hour which had been fixed upon for the show. Nothing could be done in his absence : the massacre was deferred till the morrow ; and again on the morrow a similar cause occasioned a similar delay. During all this time the Jews, shut up in the hippodrome, ceased not by earnest, humble prayer, to implore that mercy from God which they could not hope for from the tyrant.

On the third day the king took his seat to behold the fearful execution. Multitudes hastened with barbarous eagerness to the spot, to see their unhappy fellow-creatures torn limb from limb, for no other crime than that of holding fast their holy faith. The huge elephants were brought forth, maddened with frankincense and wine, that they might with more rage execute the king's vengeance upon his innocent subjects.



ALEXANDRIA.

But no sooner were the fierce animals let loose, than, neglecting their intended victims, they broke bounds, and furiously rushed upon the crowds assembled to view the execution! The air was filled with loud shrieks and cries, the multitudes fled in dismay; but many were trampled under foot, many were destroyed by the savage elephants. Ptolemy, a witness of the terrible scene, dared no longer oppose his puny strength to the irresistible power of Israel's God; he dared no longer persecute the Jews, who were so manifestly protected by Heaven. He revoked all his decrees against them, and loaded them with favours and gifts, 216 B.C.



ANTIOCHUS THE GREAT.

The tyrant Philopater died, 205 B.C., while yet in the prime of his manhood; and as his title devolved on a little child, Antiochus the Great, king of Syria, soon succeeded in wresting Judea and other provinces from the Egyptian crown. The Jews by no means regretted this change of masters. They willingly rendered up their strongholds to Anti-

ochus; and on his advancing to Jerusalem, the priests and elders went forth in procession to meet him, and received him with gladness. They had little reason, indeed, to uphold the cause of their Egyptian tyrants.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.

323—205 B.C.

	B.C.
Beginning of the first Punic War.....	264
Second Punic War.....	218
Battle of Cannæ	216





CHAPTER VII.

JUDEA UNDER THE YOKE OF SYRIA.

The Bright Horseman—The Temple Profaned—The Image of Jupiter—
The Mother and her Seven Sons.

ANTIOCHUS the Great died, 187 B.C., and Seleucus Philopater succeeded. It is during the reign of this monarch that some remarkable events are said to have occurred, as related in the book of the Maccabees.

Simon, a Benjamite, having been appointed governor of the temple, some disputes arose between him and Onias, who was high priest at the time. Finding that he was unable to prevail against him whom the Jews regarded as their lawful chief, Simon fled to Apollonius, the governor of Coele-Syria and Palestine, under King Seleucus, and informed him that great treasures were laid up in the temple at Jerusalem. This

account, as was probably intended, excited the cupidity of the king, and Heliodoros his treasurer was despatched to seize upon the coveted wealth.

Heliodoros arrived at Jerusalem, and was courteously received by Onias. The treasurer declared to him the purpose of his journey, and asked him whether the report were true that much gold was to be found in the temple.

Onias replied that there was indeed money laid up there for the relief of widows and orphans, but earnestly expostulated against any attempt to carry away from the temple the treasure committed to his trust.

Heliodoros had, however, received the positive commands of the king, and was resolved to carry them into execution.

The high priest was in the deepest distress ; and his horror and indignation at the intended robbery and sacrilege were shared by the priests and the people. Women, girded with sackcloth, mourned in the streets ; the priests prostrated themselves before the altar—all, lifting up their hands, implored the Lord to keep safe and sure that intrusted treasure which they were themselves unable to defend.

Then, as is related, there appeared before

Heliodoros* a horse, on which sat a terrible rider, arrayed in bright armour of glittering gold ; and beside him glorious beings, who, with scourges, sorely chastised the mortal who had dared to



HELIODOROS DRIVEN FROM THE TEMPLE.

profane the sanctity of the temple. Overpowered by the vision, Heliodoros fell to the ground, thick darkness seemed to surround him, and he was

* In giving this and other such stories to the reader, the authoress thinks it right to remind him, that in such parts of Jewish history as are *not* drawn from the sacred records (as in all other very ancient writings), such a mist often lies on the boundary which divides fact from fiction, that it is almost impossible to define it.

carried, fainting and almost dying, from the treasury which he had impiously entered.

Seleucus was succeeded, in 175 B.C., by his brother Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the most base and cruel tyrants that ever disgraced a throne. As soon as he was settled in the kingdom, Jason, the unworthy brother of Onias, by underhand means contrived not only to induce the monarch to let him supplant his brother, but to banish Onias to Antioch, where this good man was subsequently murdered.



ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES.

Jason was now high priest, and the use which he made of his power was such as might have been expected from his treacherous mode of obtaining it. Honour, patriotism, religion were all sacrificed to his desire to retain the favour of the king. He erected a gymnasium for games, after the fashion of the Greeks, whom he sought in all things to imitate. Jason did all in his power to induce his countrymen to abandon the customs of their fathers, to break their covenant with God, and to conform to the manners of the

heathen. The services of the temple were abandoned, and corruption spread amongst the people.

Retribution soon overtook the wicked Jason, and as he had meted to another it was measured to him again. His brother Menelaus supplanted him in the same manner that he had supplanted Onias, and succeeded to his title and his power, more than emulating him in his impiety and guilt.

Jason was not disposed easily to yield up his ill-acquired dignity. Taking recourse to arms, in 171 B.C., he marched with a thousand men against his own city, took possession of Jerusalem, drove Menelaus to seek shelter in its castle, and committed great cruelties on such of the citizens as he deemed the partizans of his brother.

The just chastisements of the Almighty were now descending upon his backsliding people. Antiochus hearing of what had occurred, and deeming that the whole Jewish nation had revolted, hastened to Jerusalem with his forces, and slew in the devoted city no fewer than four thousand persons. As many were sold as slaves. Conducted by the impious Menelaus, Antiochus forced his way into the temple, plundered it of vast treasures, and polluted the altar of God by

offering on it a sow, which was held in abomination by the Jews. Well might the miserable descendants of Abraham think that the Almighty whom they had forsaken, had utterly forsaken them now; that His mercy had left them for ever; and that, after so many deliverances, they were finally given up for their sins to destruction.

But there were yet amongst the Jews those who clung to the faith of their fathers, and rested with earnest hope on the promises given through the prophets. Jerusalem still was the guardian of the light of Truth in a world that lay in darkness, and neither the powers of earth nor hell could prevail to quench it.

Dark and fearful, indeed, was the cloud of tribulation which rested upon Jerusalem. Antiochus, not contented with his late fearful cruelties, sent Apollonius, his general, to wreak yet further vengeance on the city of David. After having slain great multitudes of the people, and sent away ten thousand captives, Apollonius plundered the town, set it on fire, and demolished the wall. The daily sacrifices ceased in the temple; Jerusalem was deserted. Officers were appointed to compel the miserable Jews to sacri-

fice to idols. The Samaritans consented to receive an image of the false god Jupiter into their



IMAGE OF JUPITER.

temple on Mount Gerizim; and another, to the horror of all true children of Abraham, was placed in the temple of Jerusalem!

In this period of awful trial, glorious saints and noble martyrs were found ready rather to suffer unto

death than to deny the God whom they adored. Such a spirit of devotion as that which had supported Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, when the fiery furnace glowed before them, animated still the faithful servants of the Lord.

An example of noble constancy was given by Eleazar, an aged scribe, who was urged by his persecutors to break the law of Moses. The noble old man was scourged to death, bravely enduring to the end.

A mother and her seven sons were brought before Antiochus, and threatened with the most fearful tortures should they disobey his unlawful

commands. One and all this devoted family preferred death to apostasy. The mother, with refined cruelty, was made to witness the dying agonies of her sons. Far from weakening their courage by tears and lamentations, the Jewish matron exhorted her children to keep faithful to their God, cheering them in that awful hour by hopes of a joyful resurrection. Faith and strength from above supported these glorious martyrs. One of the young men exclaimed, as he stretched forth his hands for the torture, "These I had from Heaven, and for His laws I despise them, and from Him I hope to receive them again!" One after another, six of the sons closed their eyes in death, committing their souls to their Creator. One only, the youngest, remained, and even the tyrant appears to have been touched with some compassion for his tender years, for he promised the youth with oaths to make him a rich and happy man, if he would turn from the laws of his fathers. When the young Jew refused to hearken to his offers, the king bade the mother, already bereaved of so many children, use her endeavours to save the last by counselling submission and obedience.

But she, strong in faith, addressed her son in

the Hebrew language, conjuring him, even by his love to her who had borne him, to endure any amount of suffering rather than sin. "Fear not this tormentor," she cried; "but being worthy of thy brethren, take thy death, that I may receive thee again in mercy with thy brethren."

While his mother was yet speaking these words, the noble youth turned to the executioners. "Whom wait ye for?" he exclaimed; "I will not obey the king's commandment, but I will obey the commandments of the law that was given unto our fathers by Moses. And thou," he continued, looking at the tyrant, "shalt not escape the hands of God. For we suffer because of our sins; and though the living God be angry with us a little while for our chastening and correction, yet shall He be at one with His servants. But thou, O godless man! be not lifted up without a cause, or puffed up with uncertain hopes, lifting up thy hand against the servants of God, for thou hast not yet escaped the judgment of Almighty God, who seeth all things. For our brethren who now have suffered a short pain, are dead under God's covenant of everlasting life; but thou, through the judgment of God, shall receive just punishment for thy pride. But I,

as my brethren, offer up my body and life for the laws of my fathers, beseeching God that He would speedily be merciful unto my nation."

The tyrant, enraged at the fearless words of the youth, put him to death by tortures more dreadful even than those that his brothers had endured; and then the devoted mother, faithful unto death, and under a trial more terrible than death, followed her glorious sons by the same brief and bloody path, to the haven of eternal rest prepared for those who, like them, count God's service as dearer than life.

The dying prayer of the young martyr had been heard. The Lord was preparing a deliverance for his persecuted people.

The Jews, quiet and peaceful as they had shown themselves to be under the sway of their rulers—Assyrian, Persian, and Egyptian—had at length been goaded beyond their power of endurance; or rather, the Almighty having compassion on their sufferings, was pleased again, as in the days of old, to raise up for them mighty deliverers.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.

	205—170 B.C.	B.C.
Battle of Zama		202
Sparta subdued by the Romans		194



CHAPTER VIII.

VICTORIES OF JUDAS MACCABEUS.

Rising of the Jews—Martyrs to the Law—Apollonius Defeated—Seron Defeated—Lycias Defeated—The Temple Cleansed—Death of Euphranes—Siege of Bethsura—Exploit of Eleazar—The Temple Besieged.

THE noble family of the Asmoneans, so called from Asmoneus, one of its ancestors, was amongst the most distinguished in Judea, and dwelt at this period in the town of Modin. At the head of this family was Mattathias, the father of five noble sons, Joanan, Simon, Eleazar, Jonathan, and the illustrious Judas, surnamed Maccabeus.

Deeply did Mattathias mourn over the oppression of his people, and the desecration of the altar of his God ; and he heard with emotions of indignation that the king's officers had come to his own town, to compel all to sacrifice to the gods of the heathen.

Mattathias being a person of great influence, the emissaries of Antiochus spared no pains to induce him, by many promises, to give an example of submission. But the brave old Jew answered with a loud voice, "Though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him, and fall away every one from the religion of his fathers, yet will I and my sons walk in the covenant. God forbid that we should forsake the law and the ordinances! We will not hearken to the king's words, to go either to the right hand or the left."

When Mattathias had concluded his declaration, there came a renegade Jew, in the sight of all, to sacrifice at the altar at Modin. Filled with indignation and inflamed with zeal, Mattathias, like another Phinehas, rushed forward and slew him on the altar; then turning on the commissioner, him he also slew, and pulled down the altar to the ground!

This was indeed drawing the sword and throwing away the scabbard! Mattathias exclaimed, "Who is zealous for the law and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me!" and leaving all that he possessed, he fled into the mountains with his sons, where they were joined by num-

bers of the faithful and brave, who were ready, like themselves, to yield up their lives rather than their faith.

A touching example of obedience to the law of God was given by a large band of Jews who, with their wives and little ones, had fled into the wilderness to escape the persecutions of the king. The fugitives were pursued, and the forces of Antiochus came up to them at a place where they had taken refuge in a cave. Philip, the leader of the soldiers, endeavoured to induce the Jews to come forth and make submission, but this they firmly refused to do. He then attacked them, and the day being the Sabbath, the Jews, scrupulously observant of the law which commands that day to be kept holy, neither stopped up the mouth of their cave nor raised a weapon against their foes. "Let us die all in our innocence," they exclaimed; and thus all—men, women, and children—were slain unresisting by the Syrians.

Mattathias and his followers were greatly grieved on receiving tidings of this cruel massacre. In full debate, after due deliberation, they came to the decision that self-defence is lawful on the Sabbath; and that, if attacked by

the foe on that day, they would fight for their lives and their laws.

Mattathias, and the brave Jews whom he had gathered around him, now leaving their fastnesses in the mountains, went to various cities of Judea, throwing down the idol altars, and driving the enemy before them. But the aged hero was soon worn out by the fatigues of warfare. He felt that the time of his departure was drawing nigh, and gathering his five sons around him, Mattathias gave them his dying exhortation.

He reminded them of the saints of old, whose faith had been crowned with success; he bade them give their lives for the covenant of God, and remember that they who trusted in Him never should be overcome. He appointed Judas, his third son, to be the leader, and Simon the counsellor of the patriots; and so, bestowing on his children his parting blessing, Mattathias yielded up his soul to his God. *Truly the hoary head is a crown of glory, when it is found in the way of righteousness.*

Then Judas, called Maccabeus from the motto on his standard, "Who is like unto Thee amongst the gods, O Jehovah!" (the initials of which in Hebrew form the word Maccabi), succeeded to

the authority of his father. There appear to have been no petty jealousies between the noble sons of a glorious sire ; they were united by a better tie than even that of blood—fellowship in a holy cause.

Judas proved himself a bold and able commander, a hero treading in the steps of Joshua, Gideon, and David. With a force not exceeding six thousand men, he took the field against the large, well-disciplined armies of Antiochus, commanded by warriors of renown.

His first great triumph was gained over Apollonius, whose sword the victor wore to the end of his life. Judas then made head against Seron, a prince of Syria, who came to attack him with a mighty host. Maccabeus was then commanding a mere handful of men, and some of his companions, disheartened at the fearful disparity of numbers, came to their chief and said, "How shall we be able, being so few, to fight against so great a multitude and so strong, seeing we are ready to faint with fasting?"

"With the God of heaven," replied the hero, "it is all one to deliver with a great multitude or a small company ; for the victory standeth not in the multitude of a host, but strength cometh

from Heaven. We fight for our laws and our lives, wherefore, the Lord himself will overthrow these men before our face !”

The result of the battle was the complete triumph of the Jews, who overcame and pursued their enemies.

This victory made the name of Judas renowned through all the neighbouring states, and it was speedily followed by others. Army after army was sent against him, and fled in broken masses before the conquering sword of him who trusted in the strength of the Omnipotent.

One of these engagements was with Lycias, a nobleman who acted as regent of Syria during the absence of its king. Lycias, with a force of sixty-five thousand choice infantry and five thousand horsemen, was met by Judas Maccabeus at the head of ten thousand men. When the Jewish leader beheld the immense host before him, before he closed in battle, he had recourse to the powerful weapon of prayer.

“Blessed art Thou, O Saviour of Israel !” he cried, “who didst quell the violence of the mighty man by the hand of Thy servant David, and gavest the host of strangers into the hands of Jonathan, the son of Saul, and his armour-bearer ! Shut up

this army in the hand of Thy people Israel, and let them be confounded in their power. Cast them down with the sword of them that love Thee, and let all that know Thy name praise Thee with thanksgiving."

The supplications of Judas were heard. The Lord God of Israel fought for His people, and the vast Syrian host fled in confusion before them.

Then said Judas and his brethren, "Behold, our enemies are discomfited; let us go up to cleanse and dedicate the sanctuary."

With what joy and thanksgiving must the valiant deliverers have been welcomed in Jerusalem, which they had freed from the oppressor! Judas and his band of heroes proceeded at once to the temple; but when they saw the sanctuary desolate, the altar profaned, the gates burned down, and herbage growing in the courts once trod by the feet of so many worshippers, they rent their clothes, and cast ashes on their heads, and fell with their faces to the ground.

But Judas, like Nehemiah, did not content himself with lamentations over the desolation which he saw—he zealously set himself to repair and to reform. He chose priests of blameless lives to cleanse the polluted sanctuary, pull down

the altar which the heathen had profaned, and build up another in its place. He also appointed warriors to fight against the Syrian garrison, which still held a fortress which had been erected by Apollonius to overlook the temple. New holy vessels were made for the sanctuary, the lamps again were lighted and sacrifices offered, and, with joy and exultation, songs of praise, and the music of harps and cymbals, the conquerors returned thanks for victory in the temple of the Lord of hosts.

By the command of Judas Maccabeus, high walls, strengthened with towers, were raised around the sacred building, to protect it from future attack, and a garrison was appointed to guard it, 164 B.C.

When Antiochus, who was on his way from Ecbatana to Babylonia, heard how the Jews had defeated Lycias, recovered the temple of Jerusalem, pulled down his idols, thrown their altars to the ground, and restored the pure worship of Jehovah, he was enraged to the utmost pitch of fury. He commanded his charioteer to double his speed, that he might the sooner arrive in Judea to execute a fearful revenge. He threatened to make Jerusalem one vast.

grave for the nation that had dared to defy his power.

But the tyrant's hour was come. He was now, according to the prophetic words of the young martyr whom he had slain, to receive the just punishment of his pride. Antiochus Epiphanes was smitten with a most horrible and loathsome disease. Yet, hatred struggling against physical pain, he endeavoured to pursue his course, till his chariot being overturned, the king was so sorely injured by the fall, that it was necessary to carry him in a litter to Tabœ, a town on the confines of Persia and Babylonia.

Here the miserable tyrant endured tortures more intolerable than any that he himself had inflicted, and was forced openly to acknowledge them to be God's retribution for his impiety and cruelty. His reason at length gave way beneath them, spectres appeared to haunt him, and this enemy of God and of his people expired at length in the greatest agonies both of body and mind.

Meanwhile Judas gained victory after victory. He defeated the people of Edom, Bean, and Ammon; took Gazer, with the towns belonging to it; won a great triumph over a vast host, under a leader named Timotheus; and subdued the

cities of the country of Galaad. He smote Hebron, and passed through Samaria; turned to Azotus, in the land of the Philistines; and when he had levelled their altars, and burned their carved images with fire, he returned back in triumph to Judea.

Antiochus had been succeeded by his son of the same name, to which was added that of Eupator. The king being too young to assume the reins of power, Lycias took the government into his own hands. The regent raised an enormous army to crush the forces of Judas. A hundred thousand foot soldiers, twenty thousand horse, thirty war elephants, and three hundred chariots were gathered together, and headed by the young monarch in person, who laid siege to the town of Bethsura.

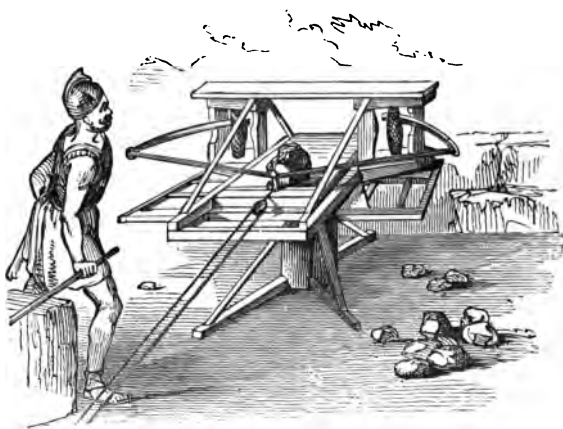
Judas collected his forces, far inferior in number to those of the enemy, and falling upon the Syrians by night, put the camp into confusion, and retreated on break of day, without suffering loss by his bold exploit, while many of the enemy were slain.

When the rising sun shed its full light on the glittering ranks of the host of Antiochus, the opposing armies closed in fierce battle. In the

fight, Eleazar, a brother of Judas, sacrificed his life in a desperate attempt to kill the young king of Syria. Seeing an immense elephant, adorned with gorgeous harness, and supposing that the monarch himself must be upon it, Eleazar furiously fought his way up to the spot, slaying all who opposed him, and thrusting his weapon into the elephant, was crushed to death by its fall.

The Jews, perhaps discouraged by the loss of Eleazar, fell back before the overwhelming hosts of Syria, and made good their retreat to Jerusalem. Bethsura then surrendered to Lycias, but upon honourable conditions.

From thence Antiochus Eupator marched to Jerusalem, where he laid siege to the sanctuary, which Judas, as before related, had fortified in case of attack. The Jews were now in extreme peril, those who defended the temple being in the utmost distress for want of provisions. Instruments for casting stones, darts, and slings, and other formidable weapons of war, were brought against the handful of men who made their desperate stand within the wall which had been raised to guard the temple. Famine stared them in the face, and their only alternative seemed to be to perish by hunger or the sword.



BALISTA, FOR THROWING STONES.

But man's extremity is God's opportunity. Lycias received tidings that Philip, a favourite of the late king, and appointed by him guardian of his successor, had seized upon Antioch, and set up his own power in opposition to that of the regent. Lycias found it necessary at once to make peace with the Jews, that he might be at liberty to march himself against this dangerous rival. He therefore proposed honourable and advantageous terms, which were accepted by Judas. The hero was recognized both by the king and the regent as the ruler of Judea; and from this

period is dated the commencement of the Asmonean dynasty, which for a hundred and twenty-six years held sway over the Jewish people, 163 B.C.

The treaty between Antiochus and Judas Maccabeus having been ratified by oath, the king and Lycias were admitted into the stronghold which had been so bravely defended. But seeing the strength of the fortification, they, contrary to stipulation, pulled down and destroyed the wall before departing for Syria.

Menelaus, the treacherous high priest, had accompanied Lycias in his expedition against Jerusalem, probably in hope of being restored to his office by the enemies of his people. But divine vengeance at length overtook this traitor to his country and his God. Menelaus lost favour with those whom he had served at the price of conscience, and they became the instruments of his just punishment. He was, by the royal command, cast headlong from a high tower into ashes, where the renegade miserably perished.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.

170—163 B.C.

	B.C.
Macedon made a province of Rome.....	168
The first library erected at Rome.....	168



CHAPTER IX.

THE DEATH OF JUDAS MACCABEUS.

Expedition of Bacchides—Victories over Nicanor—League with Rome—
Death of Judas Maccabeus.

THE reign of the noble Judas was neither peaceful nor long. The year after that in which Antiochus and Lycias had besieged the temple, they were both defeated and slain by Demetrius Soter, a prince who aspired to the Syrian crown, 162 B.C. The conqueror was no sooner established on the throne than a band of Jewish apostates came around him, with bitter complaints against Judas. At their head was Alcimus, an unworthy high priest of the Jews, who had been expelled by them with just indignation for his attachment to Grecian idolatries. Unappalled by the fate of the guilty Menelaus, this renegade sought the aid of a heathen monarch

to reinstate him in the office of which he had been so justly deprived.

The new king, Demetrius, lending a willing ear to the complaints of the Jewish traitors, sent a large force under his general, Bacchides, to support the claims of Alcimus. This commander entered Judea without meeting with any apparent opposition, and placing Alcimus in power, with what he considered a sufficient force to protect him, Bacchides returned to the king.

But the traitor Alcimus was unable to maintain himself in his dangerous position ; he was forced again to seek aid from Demetrius, who again acceded to his prayer. The king sent Nicanor, a prince of high dignity, a man who bore deadly hatred towards Israel, with a powerful force, and the royal command to execute stern vengeance on the Jews. But again the Almighty gave victory to his people. Twice was Nicanor defeated by Judas, and in the second battle the heathen general was slain.

Then, though but for a brief period, the harassed land of Judea had rest.

Judas Maccabeus now looked around for some powerful ally who might aid him in the arduous struggle which the Jews had so long maintained

single-handed against all their foes. He turned his eyes towards Rome, that mighty republic which was then advancing, step by step, to almost universal dominion. Judas sent an embassy to ask for the friendship and protection of Rome. His messengers were courteously received; the Romans entered into a league of peace and amity with a people whose heroic patriotism equalled their own, and agreed to aid the Jews by sea or by land, should Demetrius again dare to attack them.

Little did Maccabeus foresee that the powerful heathen nation, whose alliance he sought, would at a future period prove a more dangerous foe to his country than Babylon, Egypt, or Syria! Little did he foresee that Jerusalem would be trodden down by the Romans, her warriors slain, her people scattered through the earth—that through Rome she should behold her brave sons in fetters, her beautiful temple in flames! As little could he imagine that the crime for which the city of David should be given up to this fearful fate would be that of rejecting and murdering the Messiah, whose coming he, with all the faithful of Israel, awaited with hope and desire!

Before his ambassadors returned from Rome,


Judas Maccabeus, by a soldier's death, had closed his glorious career.

Demetrius the king, hearing of the defeat and death of Nicanor, sent Bacchides a second time, accompanied by the traitor Alcimus, to avenge his general, and destroy Judas and his band of heroes.

On the approach of the hostile force, a panic seemed to have seized upon the Jews, hitherto so full of faith and of courage. They remembered not the lesson which had been taught them by so many glorious triumphs, that victory is not always to the mighty, nor the battle to the strong. Silently they dispersed on every side, till their leader, deserted in his need, found that but eight hundred men remained beside him to encounter the Syrian hosts !

Sore troubled and distressed in mind at the defection of those in whose fidelity he had confided—those whom he had so often led to victory, the lion spirit of the Jewish hero still roused itself to meet the danger. "Let us arise and go up against our enemies," he cried, "if peradventure we may be able to fight with them !"

But of that success of which he doubted, his followers despaired, and urgently counselled flight.



Judas, so long accustomed to conquer, indignantly refused to turn his back upon the foe.

“God forbid that I should flee from them!” he exclaimed; “if our time be come, let us die manfully for our brethren, and let us not stain our honour!”

From morning till night raged the battle. Judas charging the right wing of the enemy with irresistible impetuosity, carried all before him, and was hot in pursuit when the left wing came up to its aid. This changed the face of the conflict. Surrounded, hemmed in by masses of the foe, but bravely fighting on to the last, Judas Maccabeus, the heroic leader, fell, and the few faithful followers who survived the bloody struggle were compelled to retreat.

The body of the hero was carried by Jonathan and Simon, his brothers, to the family sepulchre at Modin. Great were the lamentations and sorrow through Judea, as from town to town and village to village spread the tidings of the death of its prince. Many and bitter were the tears shed for the fall of Judas Maccabeus, and long was he mourned in the land for which his brave blood had been shed.



CHAPTER X.

REIGNS OF JONATHAN, SIMON, AND JOHN HYRCANUS.

Treachery of Tryphon—Judea Free—Asmonean Monument—Murder of Simon.



PERIOD of extreme distress succeeded the death of Judas. The sky had not appeared darker over Judea even during the bloody persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. Whereupon all the wisest amongst the Jews flocked to the standard of Jonathan, the youngest of the five sons of Mattathias, and made him their captain and leader, in the place of his noble brother.

In the next year Alcimus, the traitorous high priest, who had been restored to power by Bacchides, was cut off in the midst of his crimes. In his anxiety to preserve the favour of his heathen protectors, he had given orders that, in

the temple, the wall of partition should be broken down which divided the court of the Gentiles from that which Jews only might enter. But he was not suffered to complete his impious work : the Almighty suddenly smote him with palsy, and summoned him to his awful account.

The death of this wicked high priest removed one great difficulty from the path of Jonathan. In his time Syria was convulsed with civil wars, from the competitors who struggled together for its crown. In the wild storm which raged around him, Jonathan guided the affairs of Judea as a wise and experienced pilot steers his vessel through rocks and shoals. While contending monarchs rose and fell, even from their disputes the skilful ruler won advantages for his country. Jonathan, by the grant of a prince named Alexander, who was at that time opposing Demetrius, assumed the office of high priest with the full consent of the Jewish people, 152 B.C. From this period, till the time of Herod, the dignity became hereditary in the Asmonean family. Jonathan was now enabled to proceed with his various improvements and repairs, restoring justice throughout the land, and reforming, to the best of his power, that which was amiss both in church and in state.



HIGH PRIEST.

For many years Jonathan had ruled over Judea, when an act of shameful treachery removed

him from his post of usefulness and honour Tryphon, who had been governor of Antioch, aspired to the crown of Syria, and his unscrupulous ambition was eager to trample down every obstacle that stood in his way. Such an obstacle he foresaw in the firm integrity of the high priest of Judea, whom the ambitious noble found at the head of a formidable force.

Tryphon, seeing Jonathan so powerfully attended, durst not openly attempt anything against him, but deceived him by flattering words, and a false appearance of friendship. He assured the high priest that he only came to consult him on matters which regarded their common interest, and that he was about to place the town of Ptolemais in Jonathan's hands.


By these treacherous pretences Tryphon induced his unsuspecting victim to trust himself with a small force within the walls of Ptolemais. No sooner had they entered than the gates were closed by order of the traitor, and a massacre commenced. Of those who had accompanied Jonathan not a man was spared ; and though he himself lingered for a space in captivity, and earnest were the efforts of his brother to save his life, the merciless Tryphon completed his crime,

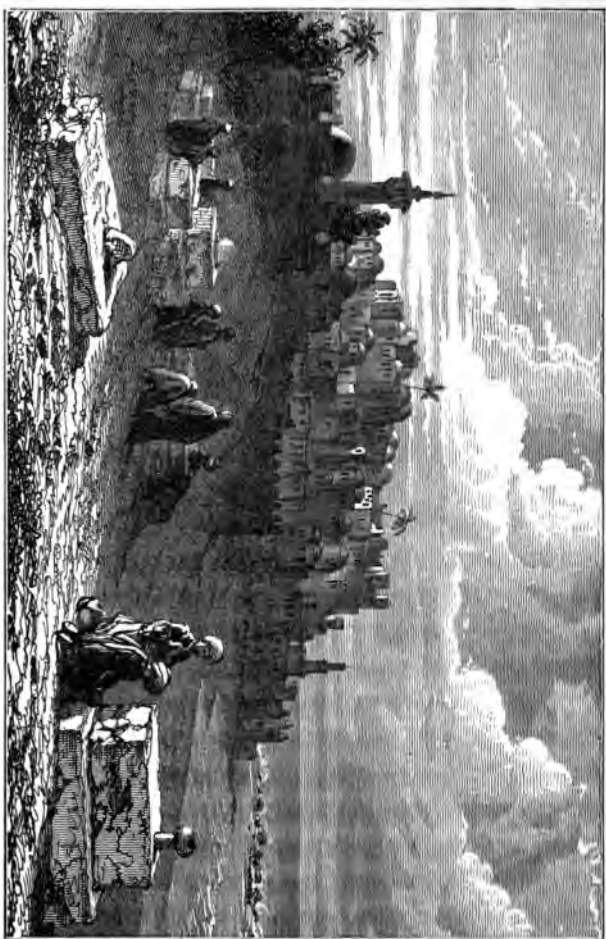
and the noble prisoner was slain by his command,
144 B.C.

With indignation and horror the Jews heard of the treachery of Tryphon. Deprived by this sudden stroke of their leader, and seeing enemies gathering around them, their hearts failed them for fear. At this hour of peril Simon, the elder brother of Jonathan and Judas, showed himself worthy of his race. He went up to Jerusalem, assembled the terrified people, and offered himself as their leader. With joy the Jews hailed as their captain the last surviving son of Mattathias.

One of the first acts of the new high priest was to strengthen the friendship with Rome which had been commenced by Judas Maccabeus. He also sent a crown of gold to Demetrius, the rival of the guilty Tryphon, and received from him a grant of the principality of Judea, free from all taxes, tolls, and tributes, on the condition of the Jews aiding him to crush Tryphon, the murderer of Jonathan. Thus Simon became not only high priest, but sovereign prince of Judea, which for a space was entirely freed from the yoke of any foreign nation.

Simon showed himself to be an able leader as well as a prudent statesman. He took Gazara,





JOPPA.

Joppa, and Jamnia, drove the heathen from the fortress which overlooked the temple at Jerusalem, and razed the fortress itself to the ground.

Nor, amidst his labours for the good of his people, did Simon omit to pay due reverence to the memory of the dead. The body of the murdered Jonathan was taken from the place where he died, and buried in the sepulchre at Modin, beside those of his brave father and brothers. Simon raised there a splendid monument of white marble, with seven stately pyramids—one for his father, one for his mother, four for his brethren, and the seventh for himself. This monument being on an eminence, was seen far off at sea; and often as the Jewish mariner turned his eyes towards it, would he think with grateful reverence of the heroes sleeping beneath it, the memory of whose noble deeds has proved more enduring than marble.

After ruling Judea for about nine years, Simon was cut off by treachery even yet more base than that to which Jonathan had fallen a victim.

Ptolemy, his own son-in-law, who held an office under the high priest, secretly aspired to fill his place. This most wicked and perfidious man invited Simon to an entertainment which he

had prepared in a neighbouring castle. The venerable high priest suspected no evil from one to whom he was so nearly connected, accepted the invitation, and went to the fortress with two of his sons.


In the midst of the feast, when the wine-cup went round, and the unsuspecting guests never dreamed of danger, suddenly assassins burst in amongst them, and Simon and his two sons were ruthlessly murdered!—135 B.C. Not contented with committing this fearful crime, determined to leave no son to succeed to the slaughtered prince, or to avenge his death, Ptolemy sent a party to Gazara to assassinate John Hyrcanus, the son of Simon. But tidings of the foul murder of his father and brothers reached Hyrcanus in time to put him on his guard. Hastening to Jerusalem, he secured the city and the temple against those whom the traitor had sent to take possession of both. His activity, wisdom, and courage defeated the designs of Ptolemy, and wrested from him the fruit of his crime.

John Hyrcanus was declared prince and high priest of the Jews, whom he governed for many years with great wisdom and success. Emulating the military prowess of his predecessors, Hyrcanus

made himself master of all Galilee and Samaria, and other places in the country around him, till none of the neighbouring tribes dared attempt to cope with the Jews, and he passed the remainder of his days in full repose from all foreign wars.

In the latter part of his life, however, Hyrcanus met with much trouble from the Pharisees, a large and mutinous sect of the Jews. These, with pretensions to singular sanctity of life, and the strictest obedience to the law of Moses, covered a spirit of insolent ambition and intolerable pride.

Hyrcanus, who knew the great influence acquired by the Pharisees over the people, attempted at first to attach them to himself by all manner of favours. He invited the heads of the sect to an entertainment, and having there liberally regaled them, he addressed his guests to the following effect :—He told them that the fixed purpose of his mind had always been to be just in his actions towards men, and to do all things towards God that should be well-pleasing to Him, according to the doctrines which the Pharisees taught. He desired those whom he now saw at his table, should they behold anything in him wherein he failed of his duty in either of these its two branches, to give him the benefit of their



instructions, that he might thenceforth reform and amend.

In reply to this humble address, the Pharisees loaded their high priest with praises for his wisdom and goodness, with the exception of one Eleazar, a man of turbulent and mutinous spirit, who, when the rest were silent, stood up, and with astounding audacity exclaimed, "Since you are desirous to be told the truth, if you would approve yourself a just man, quit the high priesthood, and content yourself with being the governor of the people!"

Eleazar tried to support this very startling demand by the false assertion that the mother of Hyrcanus not having been a Jewess, he was debarred by the law from exercising the holy office of high priest.

Hyrcanus was deeply wounded. Insulted in his own house, in the presence of his guests, and on a point where, both as a pontiff and a Jew, he was most keenly sensitive, he appealed to the Pharisees around to declare what punishment was merited by one who dared to defame the high priest and prince of his people. Their reply was so little satisfactory to Hyrcanus, that he suspected that the insult which he had received

had been a thing previously concerted amongst them. He became from thenceforth the bitter enemy of the Pharisees, and transferred all the favour which he had previously shown them to the rival sect of the Sadducees.

It cannot be supposed, however, that so righteous a man as John Hyrcanus adopted all the errors of a sect that afterwards denied the existence of angel or devil, and rejected the blessed doctrine of a resurrection. It is probable that at this time the Sadducees themselves had not gone further than renouncing the unwritten traditions, to which the Pharisees gave great and dangerous weight, regarding them with the same reverence which they paid to the inspired Word of God.

Hyrcanus died 107 B.C., and was succeeded in both his offices by his eldest son Aristobulus.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.

152—107 B.C.

	B. C.
Carthage destroyed.....	146
Numantia destroyed.....	133



CHAPTER XI.

STRIFE BETWEEN THE ASMONEAN PRINCES.

The Diadem—Matricide and Fratricide—Horrors at Bethone—Reign of a Woman—Contest between Brothers—Jerusalem twice taken by the Romans.

HITHERTO the history of the house of the Asmoneans has been a record of the brave deeds of noble men; but from this point it becomes little but a dark catalogue of crimes. We feel, in entering upon it, like a traveller who, after threading a majestic mountain-pass, which looks only the more sublime from the contrast of strong lights and shadows thrown over it by passing clouds, comes on a waste and howling desert, and quickens his pace instinctively, that he may the sooner reach a fairer, brighter scene beyond.

The noble sons of Mattathias seem to have

shown no rivalry or emulation ; each was ready to do his duty where the Lord had assigned his post ; and though three brothers ruled in succession, the first-born of them was content to be the last to rise to power. Far otherwise was it with Aristobulus, the son of John Hyrcanus. Ambition was the idol that he worshipped. Not content with the authority, he must also assume the title of King. He was the first of the race of Asmoneus who put a diadem upon his head. He caused the assassination of one of his brothers, whom he suspected of aspiring to the throne, and cast three others into prison ! Plunging into a yet more fearful depth of crime, on finding that his own mother, by virtue of the will of Hyrcanus, claimed a right to the sovereignty of Judea, Aristobulus overpowered her, threw her into confinement, and suffered her there to perish of hunger !

The reign of this monster was but brief. Grievous remorse imbittered and probably shortened his life. He died in a state of extreme anguish of mind, having reigned over Judea for but one year, 105 B.C.

As soon as Aristobulus was dead, his queen restored his three imprisoned brothers to freedom ;

the eldest of whom, Alexander Janneus, ascended the vacant throne. But the warning given by the miserable death of Aristobulus did not deter Alexander from following in his steps, and dyeing his hand in the blood of a brother. Nor did his barbarous cruelty end here.

King Alexander, entering into the temple, to officiate as high priest in the feast of tabernacles, was rudely insulted by the people, to whom he was personally odious. Disregarding the sanctity of the place, or the solemnity of the occasion, the mob pelted the royal pontiff with citrons; called him slave, and other opprobrious names; and wound up his fury to such a pitch, that he fell on the crowds with his soldiery, and six thousand lives were sacrificed to the revenge of the insulted king. This was the commencement of a civil war, in which fifty thousand persons are said to have perished.


The concluding and most horrible event of the war was Alexander's triumph over the town of Bethone. Eight hundred of its unfortunate defenders were carried by the king to Jerusalem, and there crucified by his command. Their wives and children were killed before their eyes as they hung in their dying torments, while the

tyrant and his wives sat feasting and enjoying the horrors of the scene.

This most unworthy king of Judea died in camp of a quartan ague, 79 B.C.

Alexandra, the queen, a woman of prudence, assumed the reigns of government on the death of her husband, and Judea was for about nine years wisely ruled by a woman. Alexandra made her eldest son, Hyrcanus, high priest at Jerusalem, he being at that time thirty-three years of age. Hyrcanus was a man of quiet temper and indolent habits, unfitted to make a struggle for his rights; and on the death of the queen, Aristobulus, his younger brother, wrested from him both the high priesthood and the kingdom, 70 B.C.

But Aristobulus wore not the crown in peace. Great disturbances arose in Judea, having their origin in the ambition of Antipater, an Idumean by birth, but professing the Jewish religion. Having been brought up in the court of Alexander Janneus, and that of Alexandra his successor, Antipater hoped through his favour with Hyrcanus, whom he naturally regarded as their heir, to rise into importance in the state. These hopes were disappointed by the dethronement of



Hyrcanus. Henceforth the anxious efforts of the Idumean were directed to rousing the dethroned prince to make a vigorous struggle to regain his lost throne.

Hyrcanus was neither active nor ambitious—he valued his own ease above the title of King of Judea; but at length being persuaded by Antipater that his life was in danger from his brother—that he had no choice but to reign or to perish—Hyrcanus engaged in the contest for power. The generality of the people declared for Hyrcanus, while many of the priesthood clung to the usurper, and a battle took place in which the forces of Aristobulus were defeated.

An event occurred at this time which shows how far the Jewish people had fallen from the piety of their ancestors, how the crimes of their wicked rulers were emulated by those below them.

There was at Jerusalem a man named Onias, so noted for his sanctity of life, that it was believed by his countrymen that to his fervent prayers rain had been granted in a season of drought. Concluding that the saint's maledictions must equally prevail with his prayers, the superstitious followers of Hyrcanus brought Onias

forth, and urged him to curse Aristobulus and his friends, who were then besieged in the temple. Long the saint refused to listen to such evil entreaties ; but at length, to quiet the importunity of the people, he stood up in the midst of them, and lifting up his hands towards heaven, the good man uttered this prayer :—"O Lord God, Ruler of the universe ! since those that are with us are Thy people, and they that are besieged in the temple are Thy priests, I pray that Thou wouldst hear the prayers of neither of them against the other !"

Instead of being touched by the patriot's prayer, the furious people were so much enraged, that, snatching up stones, they hurled them against the saint. Onias was actually stoned to death because he would not defile with curses the lips so often employed in prayer, nor invoke the Almighty's vengeance upon the misguided people whom he yet regarded as his brethren.

The contest which raged in Judea produced that which is the frequent result of such intestine struggles—a third party being called in as umpire, and that umpire taking advantage of the dissensions of the rivals to establish his own power over both. Such an umpire was found

by the Asmonean brothers in the ambitious republic of Rome. The dispute between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus was referred to the decision of Pompey, a celebrated Roman general. Both



POMPEY.

the princes stooped to appear in person to plead their respective causes before a stranger and a heathen.

Various intrigues and negotiations followed. Aristobulus, perceiving at last that the decision of Pompey was not likely to be in his favour,

abruptly withdrew to make preparations for war. His conduct towards the Roman general was marked by mingled deference and distrust. Fearful of offending one who would be so powerful either as an ally or a foe, he endeavoured by every means to induce Pompey to recognize his title to the crown.

The blessing of Heaven did not rest upon the efforts of this ambitious prince. Pompey thought himself mocked and deceived, and before the year was concluded he had put Aristobulus in fetters, and had laid siege to Jerusalem.

Ill fares the city that is divided in itself! Hyrcanus and many of the Jews, allowing the spirit of patriotism to be lost in the spirit of party, supplied the foreign foe with every necessary for carrying on the siege. For three months the city held out, when, a breach being made large enough for an assault, the fierce soldiery rushed within even the wall which protected the temple. A savage massacre of the defenders followed, and none acted more cruelly herein than the Jews of the opposite faction. In this terrible scene of destruction, the priests, who were in the temple at the time when it was carried by storm, went on with the daily service, without being

deterred by the horror of seeing their friends fall around them, or the fear of sharing their fate. Many of these heroic priests were slain by the enemy's sword, and their blood mingled with that of the sacrifices which they were offering on the altar of God, 63 B.C.

Pompey entered the temple as a conqueror; and not contenting himself with viewing the splendour of the outer courts, he violated the feelings of all pious Jews by intruding into the Holy of holies. The sound of the heathen victor's tread echoed in that sacred place into which the high priest alone had been privileged to enter; but had it not been as much profaned when an Aristobulus or an Alexander presumed there to worship a holy God, while they were stained with the guilt of a brother's murder?

Hyrcanus was restored to the office of high priest, he was also made prince of Judea; but the dignity of the title was lost with the independence of his unhappy country. Judea was no longer free—she was under tribute to the Roman conquerors—she now bowed to the yoke of that nation which was at length to crush her even to the dust.

Aristobulus was carried to Rome, where, with

his two sons, he was compelled to grace the triumph of Pompey. Bitter must have been the humiliation of the ambitious Asmonean prince when following the triumphal chariot of his heathen conqueror through streets thronged with



ROMAN TRIUMPH.

eager multitudes! In vain might he long that the earth would open before him to hide his disgrace from the curious gaze of unpitying eyes! *They who exalt themselves shall be abased.*

Aristobulus long remained a prisoner in Rome; and when at length political changes in that city seemed to open to him a path to freedom and to power, his ambitious career was suddenly closed by poison, administered to him as he was returning to his country, 49 B.C.

Hyrcanus bore the name of ruler in Jerusalem, but the real power lay in the hands of the ambitious Antipater, the Idumean, who enjoyed great favour with the Romans. Phasael, his eldest son, was made governor of Jerusalem; Herod, his second son, governor of Galilee. The latter, who afterwards sat on the throne of Judea under the title of Herod the Great, was a man of singular energy and courage, as well as of political talent. He strengthened his influence with the Jews by marrying Mariamne, the beautiful granddaughter of Hyrcanus, and thus allying himself to the royal family of the Asmoneans.

In the year 40 B.C., Antigonus, son of Aristobulus, assisted by the Parthians, made a desperate effort to win the regal power, in aspiring to which his father had lost first his freedom and then his life. Antipater the Idumean was dead—he also had perished by poison; and his son Herod was absent from Judea, when the Parthians marched

upon Jerusalem, plundered the country round, seized upon the city, and made Antigonus king. Hyrcanus and Phasaël were delivered up in chains to the mercy of the conqueror. Phasaël, knowing his death to be determined upon, in desperation dashed out his own brains against the walls of his dungeon. Antigonus spared the life of Hyrcanus, his dethroned uncle; but cut off his ears, that he might be for ever disqualified from being high priest, as no one with a member imperfect was capable of holding the office.

Herod, hearing of the dethronement of Hyrcanus and the death of his own brother Phasaël, hastened to Rome, to seek there for help from his powerful allies. Aided by them, he brought a large force into the field, and besieged the new king in Jerusalem, 38 B.C. It was not till the next year that the city was taken, as it was desperately defended by the Jews. At length the Romans entered on every side, and filled all the streets with blood and slaughter, till Herod himself interceded for the people, exclaiming that the Romans would make him king only of a desert.

Antigonus, seeing that all was lost, surrendered himself to the enemy. Herod did not consider

himself secure in the kingdom which was bestowed upon him by his Roman allies, as long as one prince of the blood-royal remained alive on the earth. With great difficulty he obtained from the Roman general a decree condemning Antigonus to death. The sentence was executed on the unhappy prince; and beneath the axe of the lictor perished the last king of the male line of the Asmonean race. We have now followed the thread of the history of that race from its first glorious commencement to the period when, stained as it was with blood, and darkened with crime, we trace by it only the miseries and wrongs of unfortunate princes in the realm once ruled by their fathers. We behold in that history the end of ambition. The descendants of the noble Mattathias were great until they aspired to be greater, and glorious until they ceased to seek God's glory rather than their own.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.

107—38 B.C.

	B.C.
Cataline's conspiracy at Rome.....	66
Cæsar's invasion of Britain.....	55
Battle of Pharsalla.....	48
Death of Cæsar.....	44



CHAPTER XII.

REIGN OF HEROD THE GREAT.

The Fatal Pond—Joseph's Secret—Death of Hyrcanus—Fate of Mariamne, her Mother, and her Sons.



AND now, for the first time, there reigned in Judea a king who was not of the race of Jacob—a king who had been placed on the throne by a foreign power, and who was chiefly maintained there by foreign influence.

As the cruel and unscrupulous character of their ruler developed itself, the Jews had reason to feel their degradation more deeply, and to long more earnestly for the time, now at hand, when the Deliverer should appear in Zion.

We have seen that Herod had united himself in marriage with Mariamne, the grand-daughter of Hyrcanus, a princess who, in the graces of her person, is said to have excelled all the women of



her time, and whose spirit was equal to her beauty. She possessed great influence with Herod, who loved her as ardently as one of his hard and selfish nature could love. Mariamne, and her mother Alexandra, the daughter of Hyrcanus, naturally desired to see Aristobulus, the brother of the one and son of the other, elevated to the high priesthood. The youth, who was only seventeen, was entitled by his birth to the office; and the princesses so earnestly advocated his claims, that Herod deposed the high priest whom he himself had set up, and made Aristobulus high priest in his place.

But no sooner had the tyrant raised the Asmonean prince, than he began to find in him an object of jealousy and fear. Nature had endowed the youthful pontiff, like his sister, with dignity and grace, and the power of winning to himself the warm affections of the people. Herod knew that, in the opinion of many of the Jews, he who bore the priestly office was also entitled to the kingly, and the tyrant resolved to destroy one who might become a dangerous rival to himself. The art with which he accomplished this villanous design makes its atrocity yet darker.

Aristobulus, unsuspecting of treachery, accom-

panied his brother-in-law, Herod, to a banquet prepared at Jericho. After the feast was concluded, the young high priest was persuaded to join a party in bathing. He entered the pond, which the tyrant had resolved that he never should quit alive. Under pretence of sportive play, attendants, suborned by Herod, held the struggling, gasping youth beneath the water till life was extinct, and then pretended that his death had been occasioned by an unfortunate accident.

Bitter were the lamentations over the fair young prince, and none appeared to mourn his untimely fate more deeply than Herod. Splendid was the funeral which he prepared for his victim; but his hypocrisy blinded no one, and Alexandra, the bereaved mother, silently, in the depths of her bleeding heart, nourished thoughts of revenge.

If Mariamne had ever regarded her husband with feelings of affection, the murder of her innocent brother must have changed them to feelings of horror. For such Herod gave his young wife yet greater cause. On his departure from Judea, 34 B.C., the king left the administration of government and the care of his family to his uncle Joseph. Selfish even in his love, unable to endure the idea that his beautiful queen should

ever survive him to be loved by another, Herod charged Joseph, should he himself be cut off on his journey, to put Mariamne to death.

During Herod's absence Joseph frequently visited the queen, and at these visits would dilate upon the love borne to her by her royal husband. At one time, with marvellous indiscretion, he let out the fatal secret of the command which he had received from the king, telling her that so dear was she to Herod, that as he could not live without her, so he was resolved that death should not part them. The queen could not readily forget or forgive such a proof of a husband's affection.

Herod having advanced so far on his path of guilt, waded yet deeper and deeper in crime. The aged Hyrcanus was now living quietly and honourably at Seleucia. The Jews beyond the Euphrates respected him as their king and high priest, notwithstanding the cruel measure which his nephew had taken to incapacitate him from holding the latter office. Hyrcanus had been the friend of Herod's father, Antipater; he had been the benefactor of Herod himself, and had bestowed his own grand-daughter upon him. But Hyrcanus was a descendant of Asmoneus; he had once sat

upon the throne of Judea ; and, notwithstanding his age and unambitious temper, might possibly ascend it again. This was sufficient to seal his doom. Neither gratitude, the social tie, nor respect for his gray hairs, could win mercy for the venerable prince. Herod enticed Hyrcanus to Jerusalem ; falsely accused him of conspiring against him ; and under this pretence took the life of his benefactor, after he had passed the eightieth year of his age.

Mariamne now regarded with ill-concealed aversion him who had caused the death of her nearest relations, and who had meditated her own. The contempt in which the high-born Jewess held the family of the Idumean drew upon her the bitter hatred of his mother Cyprus, and his sister Salome ; and they did all in their power to induce Herod to destroy his beautiful wife. The As-monean princess hung but by a thread over the gulf into which so many of her race had been plunged ; that thread was the passionate love of a capricious tyrant ; and it was at length snapped asunder by her own unguarded expression of the just indignation which boiled in her breast. Bitterly Mariamne reproached the murderer, who was unworthy the name of her husband, and taunted

him with the command which he had secretly given for her death in the event of his own.

Herod was stung to rage and fury, his love was changed for the time into hate, and the wicked Salome took advantage of his anger to ruin the woman whom she detested. Mariamne was falsely accused of a design to poison her husband, the father of her children. The fair young queen was brought to trial for her life; and her judges, suborned by her foes, sentenced her to be put to death.

Fearful was the struggle in the mind of Herod between his passionate love for Mariamne, and the fierce anger which possessed his soul. But Cyprus and Salome, like tempting fiends, urged him forward on his path of blood. They suggested that, if the Asmonean princess were spared, the people might rise in her behalf; and the miserable Herod was at length induced to order the execution of the fatal sentence.

The spirit of the descendant of the heroic Mattathias sustained her to the last. The queen of Judea with calm courage saw the end approaching of a life which had been crowded with so many trials; though she must have sighed at the thought of her two young sons, left under the

guidance of a father who was the destroyer of their mother. As, with a firm step and an unblanched cheek, the queen proceeded to the place of execution, her bitter cup was yet further imbibited by the unnatural conduct of Alexandra, her own mother. This unprincipled woman, dreading that she herself might become the next victim of the murderer of her son and her daughter, thought to avert Herod's wrath by loading the queen with cruel reproaches. Mariamne bore this last trial in dignified silence, and passed on to her death great, firm, and fearless to the end, 28 B.C.

Herod's rage being quenched in the blood of his innocent wife, all his affection towards her revived. Half maddened by remorse and despair, he had no rest by day or by night. The remembrance of Mariamne haunted him wherever he went, and in transports of grief he called aloud upon the name of her whom his blind fury had destroyed. A grievous pestilence raged at this time in the land, which carried off great numbers of the people, and which was regarded as the just retribution of Heaven for the guiltless blood of the queen.

The health of Herod gave way under the

pressure of his misery. While he lay sick, prostrated both in body and mind, Alexandra, seizing the favourable moment, made a plot which, if successful, would have placed in her hands both power and the means of vengeance. Her design was discovered and frustrated, and the execution of the mother soon followed that of her unfortunate daughter.

Herod had now become the object of the just detestation of the people. He endeavoured to soften their resentment for his crimes, and perhaps to quiet his own tortured conscience, by expending immense sums upon the temple at Jerusalem. For many years he employed eighteen thousand workmen upon the building. The outside was adorned profusely with gold, and the pinnacles, glittering in the sun, dazzled the eyes of admiring beholders.

But that the miserable Herod had *not* brought to God the offering of a broken and contrite heart, more precious than all the world's vain treasures—that his remorse was *not* repentance, was proved by his subsequent conduct.

The blood of Asmoneus still flowed in the veins of two young princes—Aristobulus and Alexander, the sons of Mariamne; and though these princes

were his own children, Herod regarded them with jealous fears. They might one day assert the rights of their birth—one day avenge their murdered mother.

The young men were brought up at Rome, where they had too unguardedly expressed their natural feelings in regard to the fate of the queen. Again Salome acted her fiendish part of stirring up her brother to crime. Herod's mind was filled with jealousy and suspicion. To make discovery of intended treason, the confidants of the unhappy princes were stretched upon the rack, and the intolerable torment forcing from some of them false confessions, Alexander was loaded with chains, and thrown into prison by his father.

The position of the princes excited sympathy. The good offices of Archelaus, king of Cappadocia, produced a temporary reconciliation between Herod and his sons. But the breach was not in reality healed. In 6 B.C., the unnatural Herod wrote to Augustus, then emperor of Rome, to obtain the monarch's consent to his putting his own offspring to death. Augustus had already repeatedly interposed between the tyrant and his victims, but he now left the unfortunate sons of

Mariamne to the mercy of their father. The young men were brought to trial, as their beautiful mother had been before them; and the result was in both cases the same. Sentence of death was pronounced against the princes, and they were both strangled by their father's command.

It is fearful to contemplate the state of Judea under the rule of this bloody tyrant. At the commencement of his reign Herod had given an earnest of his cruelty, by slaying all but two of the members of the great Jewish council of the Sanhedrim. Whoever opposed, or seemed to oppose, his power, was ruthlessly put to death. While Herod sought to spread his fame by the magnificence of the buildings which he raised, the people groaned under oppressive taxes. Bands of robbers ravaged the land, and were with difficulty put down by the strong hand of power. While crime stalked wolf-like through the palace, in serpent form it coiled even within the sacred precincts of the temple. Religion itself was made a mask for covetousness and pride. Different sects disputed together. The Pharisees, while scrupulously observing every outward ceremonial of the law, corrupted the pure fount of Truth by mixing with it the vain traditions of men. The

Sadducees, with bold infidelity, rejected Heaven-taught doctrines, and plunged into evil excesses, unrestrained by the dread of a judgment to come. It might seem that the chosen, much-favoured nation, so often rebelling—repenting—being chastened and forgiven—had at length filled up the cup of her transgressions, and that the Divine vengeance, like a looming cloud, was about to burst in full fury upon guilty Jerusalem.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.

38—1 B.C.

	B.C.
Battle of Actium.....	31
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CHAPTER XIII.

THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH.

Reflections on the Time and Manner of the Appearance upon Earth of the Lord Jesus Christ.


IT was at this period, when the gloom was the heaviest, the night darkest, that the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing on His wings—that the long-expected, much-desired Messiah at length was born upon earth.

Not that this was the first time that the Lord had condescended to appear to His people. As God the Father, robed in inaccessible glory, has never at any time been seen by man,—as we, who are dust and ashes, could not look upon His face and live,—it is evident that, on the various occasions on which the Lord became manifest to mortals, it was the Eternal Son who deigned to shroud His glory by assuming a visible form. Thus it

was the Divine Son who pronounced the sentence upon Adam in the garden of Eden, and who held out to the trembling Eve the merciful promise of a future offspring who should both suffer and triumph. It was the Divine Son who listened graciously to the pleadings of Abraham for the guilty cities of the plain, doomed to a terrible destruction. It was the Divine Son who, in the likeness of a man of war, appeared unto Gideon, and by a single look bestowed upon him irresistible might.

But this was to be no brief appearance—no passing glimpse of a present Deity. The Holy One was to become incarnate,—to wear the throbbing flesh, to assume the mortal nature of the creatures whom He himself had created. Well might the heavens wonder, and the earth rejoice, at so transcendent an act of condescension.

But may we not marvel that, when the Lord stooped to become man, He chose not a time when the faith of His people was strong—when their obedience was earnest? How would the devoted Nehemiah have welcomed his Master's coming!—with what joy would Judas Maccabeus have laid his conquering sword at the feet of his King! And may we not marvel that when He





BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOUR.

whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, condescended to wear a mortal body, He did not choose to appear as a mighty monarch, cradled in a magnificent palace, and adored by all the nations of the earth !

We must remember that the Redeemer of the world had a threefold office to perform : He had to save man, satisfy God, and subdue the power of Satan.

All men were under sentence of death. Eternal Truth had declared, "THE SOUL THAT SINNETH, IT SHALL DIE ;" and Eternal Justice was engaged to execute that awful sentence. *All* had sinned and come short of the glory of God. Even the babe that died when but a few hours old, born of the corrupted, inherited a corrupt nature. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ?—pure water from a fountain that is tainted ?

Before guilty man could be saved, Eternal Justice must be satisfied. A victim must be found of worth so priceless as to outweigh in the sight of the Almighty all the countless transgressions of mankind. It was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could wash away a single sin. They were offered by the saints of old to show their faith in, and to make them partakers

of the benefits of the one great Sacrifice, which was to atone for the guilt of a world.

And the Son of God came not only to save and to suffer, but also to subdue. He would meet the enemy, Satan, on his own ground. Where man had fallen under the power of temptation, the God-man would rise triumphant over every temptation which the Evil One could offer. One born of woman would, by his spotless obedience, fulfil the whole law which Adam and Adam's race had broken, and in His own strength conquering the conqueror, trample Satan under His feet.


We thus behold the Redeemer in His threefold office. To save man, He must assume man's nature ; to satisfy God's justice, He must suffer and die. His whole life must be an example of obedience under each form of sorrow and trial. He must bear the weight of poverty, endure the sting of contempt. It was by enduring that He triumphed—it was by suffering that He saved ! The lamb bleeding beneath the sacrificial knife ; the rock smitten, that its gushing waters might give life to the perishing people ; Isaac bound by his own father on the altar ;—such were the types of Him who, sinless, bore the punishment of sin, and who passed to His everlasting kingdom from

the torments of the cross and the darkness of the grave.

As this work is merely a sketch of the history of the Jews, I shall not attempt to introduce into its pages any account of the life of our Redeemer, or the miracles of mercy which He wrought. My office is to describe the political state of the land in which He deigned to appear; to record the crimes of its rulers; to place the dark background of history behind that glorious form which inspired pens have delineated in the Gospels.

The tyrant Herod had reigned about thirty-three years, when his court was startled by the tidings of the arrival of sages from the East, who had received from a heavenly sign notice of the birth of a mighty Ruler. "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" was the anxious question of the pious travellers; "for we have seen His star in the east, and have come to worship Him."

The monarch of Judea well knew that the expectation of his people was eagerly fixed upon the coming of the Messiah; he must also have known that prophecy pointed towards this time for the Holy One's appearance. The conduct of the tyrant showed that in the mysterious babe, born at Bethlehem, he dreaded a rival. He sought information





THE WISE MEN BEFORE HEROD.

of the sages regarding the child, that he might quench in blood this dawning light of Israel. Being frustrated by the secret return of the sages to their own land, Herod determined to make sure



BETHLEHEM.

of his horrible object by a more sweeping act of cruelty. He sent forth and slew all the children in Bethlehem and in the neighbouring coasts, from two years old and under, ruthlessly tearing the innocent little ones from the arms of their agonized mothers, and filling the land with the lamentations of parents weeping over their slaughtered offspring.

But it is in vain for man to fight against the decrees of God. An angel had appeared in a dream to Joseph, the babe's reputed father, and



THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

warned him to flee into Egypt with the Virgin Mary, and her infant son. Thus every babe in Bethlehem was slain by the cruelty of Herod, save the one whose life he aimed at—the only one whom he cared to destroy.



CHAPTER XIV.

DEATH OF HEROD.

Sickness of Herod—Bold Exploit—Attempt at Suicide—Barbarous Command—Death of Herod—Judea Reduced to a Province—Devoted Courage of the Jews.

THE measure of the tyrant's iniquities was now nearly full; the earth was not much longer to endure the presence of this monster of cruelty. Herod, as Antiochus Epiphanes had been before him, was struck by the hand of an avenging God with a most strange and horrible disease. The proud king became a loathsome object to all who approached him; he was consumed with inward pain, worn by incurable melancholy, tortured by unappeasable hunger, and scarcely able to breathe.

While his sickness was slowly but surely bringing Herod the Great to the tomb, an event occurred

which proved that the old heroic spirit of the Jews was not quenched, and that there were those amongst them who could not patiently endure the hated yoke of the Romans.

Two of the most learned and esteemed of the Jews, Matthias and Judas by name, burned with an ardent desire to emulate their pious ancestors, and purify the city and temple of their God from heathen profanation. Gradually they gathered around them many young and ardent spirits, whom they incited to vindicate, by some gallant deed, the honour of their religion.

Herod, with great disregard for the feelings of the nation whom he governed, had put up the figure of a golden eagle, the emblem of Roman power, over the great gate of the temple. Many a fierce and angry glance had been raised by the Jewish worshippers towards this abhorred image, and the boldest amongst them at length resolved to tear down the insulting emblem. Judas and Matthias stirred up their followers to the daring attempt, reminding them how glorious a thing it was to face danger, and even to die for the laws of their beloved country.

A party of resolute young men, in the face of day, and in the presence of a number of the

people, let themselves down by thick cords from the top of the temple, and with axes cut away the golden eagle. But the power of the dying Herod was not with impunity to be defied. A party of soldiers hastened to the temple, and about forty of the young Jews were seized, and brought into the presence of the king.

Herod demanded of them whether they had indeed been so daring as to cut down the eagle from the temple; and they frankly confessed that they had done so.

“At whose command?” asked the tyrant.

“At the command of the laws of our country,” was the young Jews’ intrepid reply.

They were in the hands of one to whom mercy was a stranger. Not only the immediate actors in the daring deed, but the teachers who had incited them to it, were burned alive by the order of Herod.

The king’s sufferings now became so intolerable, that he made a desperate attempt to end them by his own hand. One day, in the extremity of his agony, he tried to stab himself with a knife, but was prevented by a relative, who saw his design, and rushed forward in time to defeat it.

Five days before Herod expired, his son Anti-

pater, who had conspired against him, was slain by the command of his merciless father. As the gloomy tyrant's end drew near, his savage nature showed itself in yet more revolting colours. He seized upon the most illustrious men of the Jewish nation, and then confined them in a place called the Hippodrome. Herod then sent for his sister Salome and her husband, and crowned all his other acts of wickedness, by giving them the following atrocious order :—

“I know well,” said the dying tyrant, “that the Jews will keep a festival upon my death. However, it is in my power to be mourned for on other accounts. Do you have a care to send soldiers to encompass those men that are now in ward, and slay them immediately upon my death, and then all Judea and every family of them will weep at it, whether they will or no !”

This horrible command was not obeyed. Herod died, and Jerusalem rejoiced.

By his will, subject to the approval of the emperor of Rome, Herod divided his dominions amongst three surviving sons—Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philip. To Archelaus fell the government of Judea and Samaria, which he held for nine years, under the title of Ethnarch ; while

Herod Antipas reigned in Galilee ; and Philip ruled over Aulonitis and other provinces.

The tidings of the death of the tyrant Herod were brought by an angel to Joseph, who forthwith returned from Egypt with Mary his wife, and her child. Hearing, however, that Archelaus had succeeded to his father, Joseph turned aside to Nazareth in Galilee, the Virgin's former place of residence. There, for many years, the family remained in quiet seclusion, until the time arrived for the Messiah to show Himself openly to the people.

The reign of Archelaus was stormy. Desperate struggles were made by the Jews to regain their liberty, and shake off the yoke of their oppressors. They hoped that the time had at length come when their Messiah should appear amongst them, place Himself at their head, and, with more than the prowess and success of Judas Maccabeus, drive all their enemies before them. Various impostors started up, who were for a while eagerly received by the people, and who drew their misguided followers with them into destruction. The Roman general, Varus, came with an army to crush the insurgents, and by his orders two thousand of them suffered the horrible death of crucifixion.



NAZARETH.

Archelaus, a cruel, unprincipled man, was detested by the Jews almost as much as his father had been. Unable by their own efforts to get rid of the tyrant, they appealed to the Roman Emperor Augustus, by whom Archelaus was brought to trial, deposed, and banished.

The land over which Archelaus had ruled was now reduced to a Roman province, and governed



ROMAN GOVERNOR WITH CONSULAR ORNAMENTS.

by Roman procurators, who possessed the power of life and death. This office was held successively by Coponius, Marcus Ambivius, and Valerius Gratus, till, in the year 26 A.D.,* the corrupt

* 26 A.D., according to popular reckoning ; but our Lord was born four years before what we term our era.

and unprincipled Pontius Pilatè became procurator of Judea.

The new governor was not long in discovering how difficult was the charge he had undertaken. It was by no means easy to reconcile his anxiety to please and obey his Roman master, with his wish to conciliate the excited and turbulent people over whom he ruled.

A very great tumult was excited amongst the Jews by Pilatè's bringing secretly into the city images of Cæsar Augustus. This was contrary to the Jewish law, and roused the strongest indignation. Numbers of the Jews hastened to Pilatè, who was then at Cesarea, and besought him earnestly to remove the hateful ensigns from Jerusalem. On the procurator's refusal to accede to their entreaties, the Jews flung themselves down in the dust, and for five



CÆSAR AUGUSTUS.

days and nights remained upon the earth in a posture of despair.

Pilate was struck by the firm attachment of these Jews to their customs and laws, and resolved to put it to a yet greater trial. He summoned the people to the market-place, and then suddenly caused them to be surrounded by a band of armed warriors. The Jews were in the utmost consternation at the unexpected sight, and yet more so when Pilate bade the soldiers draw their swords, and sternly gave the people the alternative of receiving the images with submission, or of being instantly cut to pieces.

But the devotion of the Jews rose superior to their fear. They fell down in numbers together, and stretching out their necks for the fatal blow, declared that they were ready to die rather than that their law should be transgressed.

Pilate's opposition was overcome by the firm resolution of these brave men; and giving way to the popular feeling, he commanded that the obnoxious images should be removed from the city of Jerusalem.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENT.

Temple of Janus shut in Rome as a token of universal peace, in the year 5 B.C., when the Lord Jesus Christ was born.



CHAPTER XV.

THE DEATH OF THE MESSIAH.

Imprisonment and Death of John the Baptist—Trial and Crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ.



WHILE the Roman Procurator Pilate governed in Jerusalem, Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, reigned in Galilee under the title of Tetrarch. It was this prince who, on being reprov'd by the prophet John the Baptist for an unlawful marriage with his brother's wife, first threw his faithful monitor into prison, and afterwards, through the arts of the wicked Herodias, was persuaded to put him to death.

About two years after the perpetration of this crime, occurred at Jerusalem that awful EVENT on which hung the eternal destinies of a world. Before the tribunal of Pontius Pilate appeared the

future Judge of all mankind! Accused by His own people of perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, the incarnate Son of God stood a prisoner in the presence of the Roman procurator.

Upon the details of the awful scenes that followed, it is not the province of this history to dwell. There was a struggle in the mind of Pilate, who was convinced of the innocence of the Accused. Unwilling to condemn the guiltless Prisoner, he was yet reluctant to oppose himself to the fanatical fury of the Jews, who clamoured for the blood of their Victim. An argument was at length brought forward by the wily Jews, which added to Pilate's fear of offending the people the yet stronger dread of drawing down upon himself the wrath of the emperor of Rome. "If thou let this Man go," they cried, "thou art not Cæsar's friend. Whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar."

Overcome by that fear of man which bringeth a snare, the procurator at length gave the fatal command which consigned the spotless Jesus to the terrible death of crucifixion.

And then was consummated that awful sacrifice which had been determined on in the counsels of



CHRIST BEFORE PILATE.

the Almighty, before the foundation of the world. Rejected by His own people, betrayed by an apostle, delivered up by the cowardice of His judge to the malice of His merciless foes, the Lord Jesus, "for us men, and for our salvation," poured out His life's blood on the altar of the cross.





CHAPTER XVI.

HEROD AGRIPPA.

Death of Herod Antipas—Suicide of Pilate—Punishment of Pride—Great Riot—Tyranny—Assassinations—False Prophets.

IT was not long after the death and resurrection of our Lord, while His infant Church was struggling against its first difficulties, that Philip, brother of Herod Antipas, died. As he left no son, his territory was annexed to the Roman province of Syria; but his nephew, Herod Agrippa, was high in favour with the Emperor Caligula, and from him received the tetrarchy of Philip, together with the title of King.



CALIGULA.

Herod Agrippa was the son of Aristobulus, one of the unfortunate sons of Mariamne, who, like their unhappy mother, had perished by the cruelty of Herod the Great. He had, therefore, Jewish blood in his veins ; and when, by the favour of a succeeding emperor, Judea and Samaria were added to his dominions, he made efforts to win to himself the affections of the people whom he governed. He began to encompass Jerusalem with a magnificent wall, which he deemed would render it impregnable—thus emulating the noble work of Nehemiah, although influenced by a very different spirit.

The greatness and prosperity of this king inflamed the ambition of his uncle. “ Why should Herod Agrippa enjoy the regal title, while Herod Antipas remains but a tetrarch ? ” such were the envious reflections of the tyrant. His partner, the detestable Herodias, more than shared his ambition. She urged Herod Antipas to go in person to the emperor at Rome, assuring him that it was only because he had not appeared before Cæsar (such was the title then common to the Roman despots) that he was destitute of royal dignity.

It was meet that Herodias, who had been Herod's tempter to crime, should be also his

tempter to ruin, and then share the misery which she had wrought.

Herod Antipas sailed for Rome. Herod Agrippa followed his uncle, not to befriend, but to accuse. The emperor lent a willing ear to his favourite. The tetrarch of Galilee was not suffered to return to the land which he had stained with innocent blood. He was banished to Spain, and his dominions were bestowed on Herod Agrippa.

Herodias followed the tetrarch to the place of his banishment. There he who had slain the Baptist, and mocked the Baptist's Lord, died an exile from his country.

The fate of Pilate was yet more striking. After ruling over Judea for ten years, he was deprived of his office for his malpractices, involved in various calamities, and banished to Vienne in Gaul. There despair overwhelmed this miserable man, deprived of that favour to retain which he had sacrificed his conscience and his soul. Pilate put an end to his own life by that hand from which he had once vainly attempted to wash the stain of the blood of the Messiah.

In the year 44 A.D., Herod Agrippa the king, in order to win the favour of the Jews, openly joined the persecutors of the Church. James, one

of the apostles, was put to death by the tyrant; and Peter would have shared the same fate, had he not been delivered from prison at night by the intervention of an angel.

The career of the monarch was to be but a brief one. Herod Agrippa appeared to have all that the world could give. Riches, honours, power had been freely lavished upon him. In the splendour of his public works he appears to have emulated his grandfather, Herod the Great. Never had the grandeur of his position been more striking than when, on a public occasion, he made an oration to the people. Arrayed in a robe of silver tissue, which glittered in the rays of the rising sun, the display of his magnificence combined with his eloquence to dazzle the admiring throng. With a shout, the people exclaimed, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man!"

Herod rebuked not such impious flattery—the pride of his heart was gratified; and immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory. He was suddenly seized with agonizing pain, so that he could not refrain from calling out, "I, that ye called a god, am now going to die!" Stricken with a mysterious disease, which seems to have resembled

that which destroyed the two great persecutors, Antiochus Epiphanes and Herod the Great, Herod Agrippa was borne to his palace. There, eaten of worms, and enduring exquisite torture, this proud enemy of God and of His Church died in the fifty-fourth year of his age.

His son Agrippa, being but seventeen years old, was deemed too young to succeed to the power and dignity of his father. Three years afterwards, however, the Roman emperor made him king of Chalcis. Judea again sank to the condition of a province, ruled by governors appointed by Rome.

Under Cuspius Fadus, and Tiberius Alexander, Jerusalem appears to have had a short breathing-space of comparative rest. But they were very soon succeeded by Cumanus, and in his time war, tumult, and sedition spread misery over the land. The Jews were discontented with their Roman masters, and their efforts to break from their bondage only drew the cords still tighter.

In one alarming riot in the temple, at the feast of unleavened bread, ten thousand Jews were trodden down and killed, and the feast became a cause of mourning throughout the nation. There were fierce and bloody dissensions between the

Samaritans and Jews. Villages were set on fire, and their inhabitants massacred without distinction of age. Bold bands of robbers ravaged the land, and insurrection was rife in all quarters. In the year 52 A.D., Cumanus was removed by the emperor, and Felix was appointed procurator.

The miserable Jews soon discovered the evil qualities of their new master. Felix was mean, avaricious, and cruel. He established his residence in Cesarea; and there, under pretence of administering justice, he practised the grossest extortion. The number of robbers, or those whom he chose to punish under that name, who were crucified by this barbarous governor, was fearfully great.

About this time a horrible system of assassination prevailed in Jerusalem. A band of men who were called Sicarii, bearing daggers concealed about their persons, mingled with crowds in the city, especially at the Jewish festivals. Suddenly they stabbed those whom they regarded as their enemies, but so secretly and treacherously that the murderers usually escaped detection. The first man slain by them was Jonathan the high priest (the office had become annual); and after him so many were thus treacherously assassinated,

that men looked upon their neighbours with suspicion, and even in the day-time felt their lives insecure.

An Egyptian false prophet arose, who deluded a great number of the people. He led, according to the historian Josephus, thirty thousand of them through the wilderness to the Mount of Olives, whence he proposed to attack Jerusalem itself, and drive the Romans from the city. At the approach of Felix with his troops, the deceiver's courage failed him, and he fled, leaving his miserable followers to the vengeance of the stern procurator.

In the year 62 A.D., Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. It was during a visit paid to this procurator by Agrippa, king of Chalcis, the son of Herod Agrippa, that the Apostle Paul, long detained in prison by Felix, pleaded his own cause before an august assembly in Cesarea, and appealed to the judgment-seat of the emperor of Rome.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.

33—62 A.D.

	A. D.
London founded by the Romans	50
Caractacus carried to Rome	51
Boadicea defeated	61



CHAPTER XVII.

COMMENCEMENT OF WAR.

The Voice of Warning—Horrible Oppression—Stones thrown at Agrippa—Massacre at Masada—Advance and Retreat of Cestius—Escape of the Christians.

FESTUS did not long hold the reins of government. He yielded them up to Albinus, a man of character so extortionate, that he was said to be the real head of all the robbers in the country.

It was during the brief period of his rule, that a wailing cry was heard by those who assembled to keep the feast of tabernacles:—"A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!" The cry of woe was from a poor husbandman,



DENOUNCING WOE UPON JERUSALEM.

upon whose soul the shadow of coming national affliction lay like a heavy burden. Irritated by his mournful forebodings, the populace laid hold on the man, and beat him severely; but they could not silence the voice which cried Woe to the doomed city.

The rulers brought the peasant before Albinus, at whose command he was barbarously scourged, even till his bones were laid bare. Yet he uttered no prayer for mercy, nor could pain wring from him a tear; but at every torturing stroke he repeated, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!"

For seven years and five months the husbandman continued to cry aloud by day and by night in all the lanes of the city, while the cloud over the land grew darker and darker, and the hour of destruction drew nigh. At length, in the fatal siege which crushed the last hopes of the miserable Jews, as the peasant was crying on the wall, "Woe, woe to the city, and to the people, and to the holy house," he added, "Woe, woe to myself also!" and while the words were in his mouth, a stone from the besiegers silenced the prophetic tongue in death.

Evil as was Albinus, the Jews had cause to regret his departure, when, in the year 64 A.D.,

he was succeeded by the tyrant Gassius Florus. This, the last, appears to have been also the worst of all the governors appointed by Rome. He spoiled whole cities, ruined entire communities, and by his tyranny and oppression large tracts of country were brought to desolation.

Multitudes of the people, groaning under his intolerable yoke, made their complaint against him to Cestius Gallus, the president of Syria. They besought him to pity the miseries of the nation, and to relieve them from their merciless tyrant. Florus, who was present, laughed at their accusations, but made fair promises for the future, which he never intended to keep. It seems to have been his project by his barbarous oppression to force the Jews into a rebellion, that in the confusion and misery attendant on war, his own hateful crimes might pass unnoticed.

On the occasion of a riot at Cesarea, Florus sent to rob the temple of Jerusalem of a large sum of the sacred treasure, under pretext that it was required for the service of Cæsar. At this the people were thrown into great excitement, and some of the boldest uttered loud reproaches on the avaricious tyrant. Florus marched hastily with troops against Jerusalem, and, notwithstand-

ing the submission of the chief priests and rulers, issued an order to his soldiers to plunder the market-place, and slay all whom they met with.

Only too eager to avail themselves of such license, the troops, like bloodhounds let loose, rushed through the town, plundered the houses, murdered thousands of men, women, and children. Nor did the horrors of the scene end here. Many of the citizens, and some of them men of rank, were led before the brutal Florus, who commanded that they first should be scourged, and then suffer the death of crucifixion. Fearful, though just retribution ! The people who had chosen Barabbas, were given up to a ruler with the spirit of a Barabbas; and the very sufferings to which they had subjected their rejected Messiah, were mercilessly inflicted on themselves !

Bernice, the sister of Agrippa, interceded in vain for the people. They were not only tormented before her very eyes, but she was constrained herself to flee for her life from the fury of the cruel soldiery.

A fierce fight ensued between the Romans and the Jews. The people from the roofs of their houses threw down stones and darts on the troops, who at length, weary of this inglorious

street warfare, returned to their camp near the palace.

A regular war was now becoming inevitable. The contest between the mighty empire of Rome and a people like the Jews, weakened by internal divisions, was indeed a fearfully unequal one; but with wild infatuation the nation rushed into the almost hopeless struggle, goaded on by their own fierce passions, as well as by the cruel oppression of Florus.

It was to no purpose that Agrippa, king of Chalcis, endeavoured to dissuade the Jews from engaging in this fatal war—warning them even with tears, while Bernice wept beside him. Holier tears had flowed before for lost Jerusalem, but the things belonging to her peace were hidden from her eyes. Some of the fierce seditious people became irritated by the very efforts made to calm them. Agrippa was loaded with reproaches, excluded from the city—nay, some of the furious Jews even threw stones at the king; and Agrippa, indignant at their treatment, retired for a while to his dominions.

The fortress of Masada, garrisoned by Romans, was taken by the Jews through treachery, and its defenders slain without mercy, 65 A.D. Great



THE FORTRESS OF MASADA.

was the excitement in Jerusalem. The flame of insurrection spread fast. Fierce Zealots ranged the city; the palaces of Agrippa, Bernice, and Ananias the high priest were given to the flames; the castle of Antonia was besieged, taken, set on fire, and its Roman garrison put to the sword.

Imperial Rome was little likely to submit quietly either to revolt of subjects or insult from foes. Cestius Gallus, at the head of an army, advanced, and planted his eagles at the distance of but fifty furlongs from Jerusalem.

Agrippa accompanied the Roman forces, and resolved to make one more effort to persuade the maddened Jews to sue for forgiveness. He sent

two of his followers, named Borseus and Phebus, those of his party who were best known to the people, and promised them that Cestius should offer them his right hand in token of the free forgiveness of Rome, if even at this, the last hour, they would throw down their arms and submit.

But messengers of peace from an earthly monarch were treated as the ambassadors of mercy from a heavenly King had been by the deluded and guilty people. Phebus was murdered before he could utter his message; and Borseus, wounded and bleeding, only escaped death by flight.

Cestius now attacked the Jews, put them to flight, and pursued them even to Jerusalem. The fiercest of its defenders retreated from the suburbs into the interior of the city. For five days the Romans assaulted the wall, and attempted to break into the temple, which was obstinately defended by the Jews.

It was believed by the Jewish historian Josephus, that had Cestius at this time continued his attack, Jerusalem must have fallen, and the war at once have been ended. But suddenly, without apparent reason, the Roman general recalled his soldiers, and made his retreat from the city. To

the Jews, this strange conduct of Cestius appears almost unaccountable ; but the Christian sees in it a most remarkable instance of the merciful providence of God. The Church at Jerusalem recalled to mind the prophecy of the Redeemer : —“ When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Jerusalem flee to the mountains ; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out ; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things that are written may be fulfilled.”

The warning had not been uttered in vain. As soon as the retreat of Cestius left the way open for flight, the Christians retired from Jerusalem, like Lot from the city of the plain. In the mountains of Perea they found their Zoar of refuge, while the fiery deluge of destruction descended on the doomed city which they had left.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.

62—65 A.D.

	A.D.
Rome set on fire	64
Nero's persecution of the Christians	64



CHAPTER XVIII.

SIEGE OF JOTAPATA.—FALL OF JERUSALEM.

War—Sieges—Heroism—Fall of Jotapata—The Lot—Horrors in Jerusalem
—The City taken by Assault—The Temple Burned.

INTO all the details of this most horrible war we will not enter, nor describe how, in Cesarea, Joppa, Damascus, Jews were slaughtered by thousands and tens of thousands.

In 67 A.D., Vespasian, a distinguished Roman general, marched into Galilee, where he took the city of Gadara, and other strongholds of the land. He was accompanied by his son Titus, who, on his father's subsequent elevation to the imperial throne of Rome, headed the conquering army.



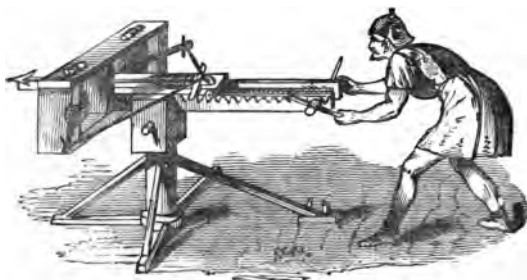
VESPASIAN.

Never, even in the time of the Maccabees, had more desperate courage been shown than the Jewish nation now displayed. Of this the defence of the city of Jotapata, under the Jewish historian Josephus, was a most memorable instance.



JOSEPHUS.

Jotapata was built on a high precipice, and was accessible only on the north side, which Josephus had strongly fortified with a wall. Against this wall Vespasian raised a high bank, and brought one hundred and sixty engines of war to throw stones, darts, and arrows



CATAPULTA FOR SHOOTING ARROWS.

into the city. But even as the bank rose, so rose the wall; the defenders labouring day and night, and protecting themselves from the innu-

merable darts and heavy stones cast by the engines, by screens formed of the raw hides of oxen, which broke the force of the missiles.

After many fierce assaults and desperate sallies, Vespasian resolved to invest the city, and starve its defenders into a surrender. There was plenty of corn within Jotapata; but the want of water was great, and Josephus was obliged to distribute it to his followers by measure. Finding, however, that the Romans had obtained some intelligence of their distress, Josephus commanded that many clothes should be plunged into water, and then hung out upon the battlements, that the abundance of water trickling from them down the wall might deceive the foe into the belief that this first necessary of life was plentiful in the city. This artifice was successful; Vespasian despaired of taking the place by famine, and again betook himself to the force of arms.

A daring stratagem was made use of to supply the wants of the garrison. Some of the boldest ventured by night out of the city to procure provisions, creeping on all fours past the outposts of the Romans, and covering themselves with skins, that if descried by the watchful foe, they might be taken for prowling dogs.

The formidable battering-ram was now brought against the walls of Jotapata. This was a huge



BATTERING-RAM.

beam of wood, whose fore-part was armed with a thick piece of iron, suspended from an engine by ropes. When the beam had been pulled back-

wards by a number of the soldiers, it swung forwards with an impetus so tremendous, that at its very first blow the wall was shaken, and a cry of terror arose from the besieged, as if the destruction of their battlements were certain. Josephus, however, ordered bags of chaff to be hung over the walls, to deaden the force of the blows; but the Romans, with sharp hooks at the end of long poles, cut the ropes by which the bags were suspended.

Eleazar, a Jew, performed a feat of heroism which is well worthy to be recorded. Standing upon the wall, he hurled a huge stone upon the ram with such precision and force, that he broke off its iron head. He then leaped down, seized on the piece, and, though a mark for the enemy, and pierced with five of their darts, he actually succeeded in carrying it off, and regaining the top of the wall, where he stood for a moment exulting, and then fell down dead from the summit, with the ram's head still grasped in his hands.

Again and again the Jews sallied forth, attacked the besiegers, and burned their engines with fire. When the Romans pressed on to the assault, scalding oil was poured on them from the

wall, and the assailants were driven back by the desperate valour of the defenders.

Jotapata fell at last, however, by an attack made by the Romans at night, when, worn out with watching and fighting, the exhausted guard lay asleep. The brave garrison found no mercy ; many were driven over the precipice, many perished by their own swords rather than fall into the hands of the foe. About twelve hundred women and children were reserved for bondage by the conquerors.

Josephus and forty of his companions, when they found that resistance was hopeless, concealed themselves by descending into a pit, which communicated with a cave. Here, on the third day, the hiding-place of Josephus was discovered by the Romans ; and Vespasian, willing to preserve the life of the general, offered him quarter if he would yield himself up.

Nothing shows in a more forcible light the obstinate spirit of the Jews, than the fury of the comrades of Josephus at the bare idea of his surrender. "O Josephus!" they exclaimed, "art thou still fond of life, and canst thou bear to see the light in a state of slavery ! If thou hast forgotten thyself, we ought to take care that the glory of our forefathers be not tarnished. We

will lend thee our right hand and a sword : if thou wilt die willingly, thou shalt die as a general of the Jews ; but if unwillingly, thou shalt die as a traitor to them !”

In their savage rage these desperate men were about to plunge their weapons into their own commander, when, grasping at the last chance of deliverance, Josephus made the following proposal : “ Since it is resolved among you,” said he, “ that we will die, let us commit our mutual deaths to determination by lot. He to whom the first lot falls shall be killed by him who draws the second, and thus shall death make progress through us all, but none shall perish by his own hand !”

The proposition was accepted. Josephus himself drew among the rest ; but as Providence ordered it, his lot was the last but one. When the general was surrounded by the bloody corpses of his fierce companions, he succeeded in persuading the only one of them who survived not to complete the horrible work of destruction. He and the man surrendered to the Romans, and received mercy from Vespasian.

But even the horrors of Jotapata were light compared to those of the siege of Jerusalem ! At

the feast of the Passover, at the season when the city was most crowded with worshippers — at the season when the Messiah had been slain—the Roman army, under the conduct of Titus, invested Jerusalem, 70 A.D. A wall was thrown up around it; there was no means of escape for the multitudes within, except that of accepting the proffered mercy of Titus: that mercy was fiercely rejected.



TITUS.

As though the miseries of such a war were not sufficient, the city was rent by internal dissensions. Eleazar, at the head of a body of fierce bigots, garrisoned the temple of Jerusalem; John of Gischala, an unprincipled ruffian, swept the streets with his bands of robbers; and Simon, a savage tyrant, filled the lower parts of the city with blood. These three parties attacked each other with the fury of ravening wolves, and only united in ferocious sallies against the common enemy. In the madness of their rage in this intestine strife, the Jews actually set fire to the houses



THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM.

which contained their own stores of provisions, and thus added to all other horrors that of the extremity of famine. Multitudes perished by hunger; and happiest were those who were first relieved by death from their horrible torments. Girdles and shoes were eagerly devoured; leather from the shields was torn off and gnawed; robbers burst into the houses where wretched families were dying of hunger, and tortured the poor wretches to force them to discover where a morsel of food might lie concealed. Many of the famished sufferers who endeavoured to escape from the city were seized by the Romans, and crucified in such numbers that wood could scarcely be found for the crosses; while if any in the beleaguered town were suspected of wishing to quit it, they were murdered by the furious Zealots. The sound of war in Jerusalem was heard by day and by night; the streets were slippery with gore; no one there attempted to bury the heaps of corpses. It is said that 1,100,000 of the people perished in this horrible siege.

One by one the three walls which encompassed the city were taken by assault; as the circle grew *narrower and narrower*, the misery within grew *more dreadful*. Unnatural horrors were perpe-

trated. Not only would parents tear the last morsel of food from their famishing babes, but, fearful to relate, a mother was known even to feed upon her own offspring! Let a veil be drawn over such awful scenes. Fearfully was the prediction of the Messiah at this time accomplished—*“There shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world, no, nor ever shall be !”*

The Lord had foretold that false prophets should arise and deceive many, and that fearful sights and great signs should be from heaven; and these words were literally fulfilled. The miserable Jews desperately grasped at the hope of a coming Messiah, and eagerly listened to deceivers, who only lured them to ruin. A wonder in the sky, resembling a fiery sword, hung over the devoted city; appearances as of chariots and assembling armies in the clouds terrified the astonished beholders; and one night the priests in the temple were alarmed by a quaking of the earth, accompanied by a strange sound, and a voice which uttered the mysterious words, “Let us depart !”

At length the hour of complete vengeance arrived. Ministers of God’s wrath, the Romans burst through the last defences of the Jews, and



TITUS LEADING ON HIS TROOPS

the torrent of blood swept the city. Titus had resolved to spare the magnificent temple ; but he could not baffle the decree of the Almighty. The Lord had declared that not one stone should be

left upon another ; and heaven and earth must pass away before one of His words can fall to the ground. A Roman soldier, acting without orders, set fire to the glorious building, which was speedily enveloped in flames. Loud and fearful rose the cry of the despairing Jews when their last hope perished in the blazing pile. In vain Titus in person exerted himself to put a stop to the progress of the fire ; the flames curled round the pillars, spread over the roof, and the crash of falling timbers, and the roar of the conflagration, mingled with the shrieks of a multitude of the Jews who were burned in the cloisters of the temple.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENT.

65—70 A.D.

	A.D.
Martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul.....	66





CHAPTER XIX.

CONCLUSION.

Reflections on the Past—Promises for the Future—Duties for the Present.

THUS fell guilty Jerusalem—once the chosen city, the joy of the earth! Thus fearful retribution overtook those who had rejected and slain the Messiah!

And what is Judea now, after the lapse of eighteen centuries? Still an oppressed and desolate land—a land which has been ruled by Saracen, Christian, Turk; but never since that fatal day by a monarch of her own. A land in bondage to strangers, whose valleys, once flowing with milk and honey, now lie comparatively barren, showing that the curse of Heaven still rests like a blight upon them.

And where are the sons of Israel, the descendants of patriots and of heroes? Scattered over

the face of the earth,—aliens in many lands, yet ever a distinct and peculiar people; jealously guarding the Scriptures of the Old Testament, though blind to their prophetic meaning; and yet looking for the appearance of their Messiah, and their own restoration to the land of their fathers.

Will the Jews ever be restored? Will they return as from Egypt and Babylon, and tread again the city of Zion? We turn to the words of prophecy, which shine like stars in the darkness, and select a few out of many:—“*Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will save My people from the east country, and from the west country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.*” * “*Ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.*” † “*And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.*” ‡ “*I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon Me whom*

* Zech. viii. 7, 8.

† Isaiah xxvii. 12.

‡ Zech. viii. 13.

they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." * "*Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem, for the Lord hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem.*" †

Christian reader! let us not forget that the Lord worketh by human means; that to us, Gentiles, who walk in the light that first shone over the plains of Judea, is committed the sacred charge, by holy example, free liberality, and fervent prayers, to gather the outcasts of Israel "one by one" into the Saviour's fold. "*What,*" wrote the Apostle of the Gentiles, pleading for his own beloved people—"what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" ‡ Well may we conclude in the words of the martyr prophet and psalmist king,—"*Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give Him no rest till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*" § "*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.*" ||

* Zech. xii. 10.

† Isaiah lli. 2, 9.

‡ Rom. xi. 15.

§ Isaiah lxii. 6, 7.

|| Psalm cxxii. 6, 7.



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